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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 27 APRIL 2025 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 28 SHAWWAL, 1446 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 113| Pages: 8

Blood will flow if India stops water: Bilawal

Pak offers 'neutral probe' in Pahalgam attack; PM Shebaz vows to retaliate with 'full force' if water is diverted

ISLAMABAD, 26 APRIL

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has threatened that blood would flow in rivers if water is stopped, in a sharp response to India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) after the Pahalgam terror attack.

Speaking at a rally in Sukkur, Bilawal said, "The Indus is ours and will remain ours – either our water will flow through it, or their blood." He accused the Indian government of targeting Pakistan's lifeline and warned of dire consequences if water flow is obstructed. He invoked the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation and declared Sindh its true custodian.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif echoed this sentiment at a military ceremony in Kakul, calling water "a vital national interest" and vowed it would be "safeguarded at all costs." He said Pakistan would respond with "full force" to any Indian attempt to divert river waters.

Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari **PHOTO: PTI**

In the wake of the terror attack that claimed 26 lives in Pahalgam, Sharif also proposed a "neutral, transparent and credible" international probe, distancing Pakistan from the assault. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reinforced this stance in Lahore, stating Pakistan is open to cooperation with investigators from a third country.

Pakistan also accused India of being behind the recent Jaffar Express train hijacking in Balochistan and demanded a neutral inquiry.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani government has suspended all bilateral accords with India, including the Simla Agreement, expelled Indian diplomats, and closed its airspace to Indian airlines. Visas for Indian nationals have also been revoked.

Despite escalating rhetoric, both Sharif and Naqvi claimed Pakistan does not seek war but stands ready to retaliate if provoked. "We don't support terrorism," Naqvi said, "but if India takes one step towards war, we will respond with two."

—PTI

>>>More on Pages 2, 3 & 5

In UK, Pak official makes throat-slitting gesture at Indians

LONDON, APRIL 26

There was a face-off between Indian diaspora groups who gathered to protest the Pahalgam terrorist attack and counter-protesters outside the Pakistan High Commission here, which saw a Pakistani diplomat making threatening throat-slitting gestures.

Videos posted on social media show the Pakistani official taunting Indian protesters while standing next to a large banner reading "Pakistan stands with Kashmiris" on the balcony of the mission building at Lowndes Square.

He held a poster with a sketch of Captain Abhinandan Varthaman and the words "Chai is Fantastic," a reference to the Indian Air Force pilot's captivity in February 2019.

Several police officers were lined up between both groups of demonstrators to ensure order.

Indians waved placards asking Pakistan to "End Terror on Kashmir" alongside the Indian national flag.

"We demand strict international action and urge the UK to support India and reconsider its policy towards Pakistan," said a spokesperson for the Friends of India Society International (FISI) UK.

Flyers outside the Pakistan High Commission depicted a call for unity and justice during the protest titled 'All Eyes on Pahalgam'.

Loudspeakers organised by Pakistani protestors blared patriotic songs to drown out the anti-terror sloganeering and speeches.

One protester was detained on the grounds of racial abuse.

The Resistance Front, an offshoot of the banned Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility for the attack. *—PTI*

I am very close to India and I'm very close to Pakistan, as you know. And they've had that fight for 1,000 years in Kashmir. Kashmir has been going on for 1,000 years, probably longer than that. And it was a bad one yesterday, though, that was a bad one. There have been tensions on that border for 1,500 years. So you know, the same as it's been, but they'll get it figured out one way or the other. I'm sure... I know both leaders. There is great tension between Pakistan and India. But there always has been

-Donald Trump, US President

India says Pak troops firing along border

SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Pakistani military resorted to unprovoked firing at Indian positions along the Line of Control (LOC), to which Indian troops effectively responded.

The exchange of fire for a second consecutive night came amid heightened tension between India and Pakistan following Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians.

"On the night of 25 April and 26, unprovoked small arms firings were carried out by various Pakistan army post all across the LoC in Kashmir," a source said.

No casualties were reported in the firing.

The Pakistan military has been put on high alert following India's assertion that it would hunt down the terrorists involved in the terror attack.

PHOTO: PTI

India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), closed the Attari land-border crossing and expelled Pakistani military attaches.

New Delhi also asked all Pakistanis who entered the country to leave by 1 May. In response Pakinstan shut down its airspace to all Indian airlines and suspended trade with New Delhi, including through third countries. It also warned that any measures to stop the flow of water belonging to Pakistan under IWT would be seen as an "act of war."

INS Vikrant is now positioned off the Karwar coast in Karnataka, 600 to 700 km from Pakistan's coastline in Punjab province to enhance India's military prowess. An US Air Force plane originating from the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar also landed in Jaipur, sparking speculation regarding its mission and the broader implications regarding foreign military presence in the region. *—PTI*

TRF denies involvement in attack

Days after the terror attack in Pahalgam, 'The Resistance Front' (TRF), which had initially claimed the attack, deniesd any involvement in the Pahalgam incident. "Any attribution of this act to TRF is false, hasty, and part of an orchestrated campaign to malign the Kashmiri resistance," they said in a notice posted on X. "Shortly after the attack in Pahalgam, a brief and unauthorised message was posted from one of our digital platforms. After an internal audit, we have reason to believe it was the result of a coordinated cyber intrusion - a familiar tactic in the Indian state's digital warfare arsenal."

India relaxed border rules for Adani near Pak

India relaxed national security protocols along the Pakistan border to enable Adani Group's construction of the world's largest renewable energy park in Gujarat's Rann of Kutch. Official documents reveal defence restrictions were eased, despite military concerns, to favour Adani's Khavda project. The land, near sensitive territory, was transferred from a state firm to Adani after changes boosted its value. Military officials weren't consulted, raising national security fears. Adani denies wrongdoing. The project is under global scrutiny, with the US indicting Adani for bribery and France's TotalEnergies halting investment. India's opposition accuses PM Modi of favouring Adani through corrupt deals.

—Agencies

Kharge flays PM for skipping all-party meet

BENGALURU, 26 APRIL

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not attending the all-party meeting on the Pahalgam terror attack, where 26 people lost their lives. Kharge said the Prime Minister's absence reflected a lack of seriousness and questioned his decision to address an election rally in Bihar instead.

Speaking to reporters, Kharge said, 'When such a grave incident occurs, the Prime Minister should be present. Unfortunately, he was not.' He added that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who chaired the meeting, admitted there had been a security lapse.

Kharge said he urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to treat the issue as a national challenge and ensure such incidents do not recur. Shah assured all-party leaders that strong measures would be taken.

- Kharge said he urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to treat the issue as a national challenge and ensure such incidents do not recur.

Despite the criticism, Kharge emphasised the need for unity, stating, 'Now is not the time to find faults but to stand together to protect the nation.'

On the government's decision to suspend the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan, Kharge raised concerns about where the withheld water would be stored, but said these issues would be discussed later, once the immediate crisis had passed. *—PTI*

When such a grave incident occurs, the Prime Minister should be present

-Mallikarjun Kharge, Cong Prez

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge inaugurated a new inpatient and post-graduate women's hostel building at Ambedkar Medical College in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

'ADIOS EL PAPA FRANCISCO'

The coffin of Pope Francis is carried into St Peter's Square for his funeral, at the Vatican on Saturday; Ukraine's first lady Olena Zelenska with Ukraine President Volodymr Zelenskyy and Indian President Droupadi Murmu at the funeral **PHOTOS: PTI** >>>More on Page 6

India, China to resume Mansarovar Yatra

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

After nearly five years, India and China will resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra from June — a move seen as an attempt to normalise relations strained by the eastern Ladakh border standoff.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Saturday that the pilgrimage will take place from June to August 2025, via two routes: Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La Pass in Sikkim. Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, located in China's Tibet Autonomous Region, hold deep religious significance for Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists.

The Yatra was suspended in 2020 due to the Covud-19 pandemic and later because of tensions along the Line of Actual Control. However, in October 2024, India and China agreed to disengage troops at Demchok and Depsang, paving the way for dialogue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Kazan and committed to reviving bilateral ties. Subsequently, a series of meetings culminated in Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit to Beijing, where the decision to resume the Yatra was finalised. This year, five batches through Lipulekh and ten batches via Nathu La — each consisting of 50 pilgrims — will undertake the journey. *—PTI*

4 DEAD, 500 HURT IN BLAST AT IRAN'S PORT

MUSCAT, 26 APRIL

A massive explosion at Iran's Shahid Rajaei port killed four people and injured over 500, with a fire linked to a chemical used in missile propellant. The blast occurred as Iran and the US held a third round of nuclear talks in Oman.

Iran has not confirmed the explosion was an attack, but Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi noted heightened security amid past sabotage attempts. Private security firm Ambrey said the fire was likely caused by mishandling a shipment of sodium perchlorate rocket fuel, received from China in March.

The fuel, first reported by the Financial Times in January, was intended to replenish Iran's missile stocks after attacks on Israel during the Gaza conflict. Ambrey claimed the fire resulted from improper handling of the solid fuel.

While Israel has not been linked to the port explosion, it has previously targeted Iranian missile sites involved in the production of solid fuel. *—PTI*

>>>More in Page 6

CAL HC JUNKS CASE

Attempt to grope breasts not rape: HC

KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

The Calcutta High Court on Friday suspended the conviction and 12-year sentence of a man under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, ruling that evidence presented did not support a charge of attempted rape.

A division bench comprising Justice Arijit Banerjee and Justice Biswaroop Chowdhury observed that while the accused allegedly tried to grope the victim's breasts, there was no indication of penetration or attempt to penetrate. The court noted that such acts could fall under 'aggravated sexual assault' as per Section 10 of the POCSO Act but not 'attempt to rape'.

The man had been convicted and sentenced by a West Bengal trial court for both offences. However, the High Court, relying on the victim's statement and medical examination, found no basis for the charge of attempted rape.

The victim had stated that the accused, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, attempted to grope her breasts.

The bench noted that if the accused is eventually convicted solely of aggravated sexual assault, the sentence would likely range between five and seven years. The accused has already served 28 months in custody.

Pending appeal, the High Court ordered suspension of the conviction, sentence, and fine, until further notice. *— Agencies*

Two boys drown in Mysuru lake

MYSURU, 26 APRIL

Two boys tragically drowned in a lake while swimming at Gumballi in the Yelandur taluk of Chamarajnagar district on Saturday. The deceased have been identified as 13-year-old Abhaygowda from Gumballi village and 14-year-old Vrushabendra from Krishnapura village. Authorities retrieved their bodies with assistance from expert swimmers in the fire department. The Yelandur police have registered a case regarding the incident *—Salar News*

Srikanteshwara Temple collects Rs 2.5 cr in a month

MYSURU, 26 APRIL

The Srikanteshwara Swamy Temple in Nanjangud, often referred to as Dakshina Kashi, has reported an impressive Hundi collection of Rs 2.59 crore over the past month. The counting of the temple's 34 Hundis took place on Saturday at Dasoha Bhavan, revealing a total of 103g of jewellery and 3kg of silver ornaments, alongside notes from 24 different foreign currencies. The Executive Officer, Jagadeeshkumar, and other officials were present during the counting process. This significant collection underscores the temple's enduring spiritual and cultural importance in the region *—Salar News*

Father & daughter drown in tank at Sidlagatta

SIDLAGATTA, 26 APRIL

A father and daughter drowned in a tank near Shettihalli, Sidlagatta taluk, Chikkaballapur district, on Saturday. The victims have been identified as 42-year-old Nagesh and his 12-year-old daughter, Dhanushree. Reports indicate that while attempting to wash her hands, Dhanushree accidentally fell into the tank. In a desperate attempt to save her, Nagesh jumped in as well, but both became trapped in the silt at the bottom and were unable to escape. Despite their cries for help, there were no bystanders nearby to assist. Tragically, both drowned before rescue efforts could be made. Their bodies were later retrieved from the tank. A case has been registered at the Sidlagatta rural police station to investigate the incident. *—Salar News*

Man dies after fall from terrace in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 26 APRIL

A 38-year-old man tragically died after accidentally falling from the terrace of his three-storey home in the Krishnarajapuram Police Station area in the early hours of Saturday. The deceased has been named as Chandrakanth Singh, a resident of Nethravathi Layout in Devasandra. According to police reports, the incident occurred around 12.30am when Singh went to the terrace. He allegedly lost his balance while returning and fell to the ground. KR Puram police arrived at the scene and conducted a preliminary investigation. Officers informed **Salar News** that no foul play is suspected at this time; however, inquiries are ongoing to rule out any other possibilities. *—Salar News*

Govt orders 92 Pakistanis to leave

4 Pak nationals are based in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 26 APRIL

Home Minister G Parameshwara **PHOTO: PTI**

Authorities have identified 92 Pakistani nationals legally residing across State, with four based in City and others spread across districts including Mysuru, Mangaluru, Bhatkal, Davanagere and Uttara Kannada.

Of these, 88 are on long-term visas, mostly due to cross-border marriages.

Following the terror attack in Pahalgam, where 26 tourists and one Nepali national were gunned down, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directed all states to identify and deport Pakistani nationals.

Home Minister G Parameshwara confirmed on Saturday that all Superintendents of Police have been instructed to compile lists of Pakistani nationals residing in their districts. He added that those on long-term visas would be exempt, but students and short-term visa holders must return. Medical visa holders have been asked to leave by 27 April.

Parameshwara stated the State has been on high alert since the attack. "Strict action will be taken against illegal residents. Central intelligence officials are in Bengaluru and will be alerted if any sleeper cells are detected," he said.

Police have already issued exit notices to several Pakistani nationals, but admitted that the number of illegal residents remains uncertain. Officials suggest such families may be excluded from immediate deportation, depending on Centre guidelines.

9 Pak nationals ordered to leave from Kalaburagi

Kalaburagi City Police Commissioner SD Sharanappa has directed nine Pakistani nationals residing in the city to return to their home country.

Addressing reporters on Saturday at the Commissioner's office, Sharanappa confirmed that of the nine Pakistani nationals living in Kalaburagi, two are on long-term visas while seven are on visitor visas.

All have reportedly been residing in the city for nearly two decades.

As part of the compliance measures, notices have been issued to six individuals—three women and three men—currently on visitor visas. One Pakistani woman, who also held a visitor visa, has already received travel clearance and has departed for the United States.

—Salar News with Agencies

BJP threatens to sue Cong over J&K remarks

BJP has hit back at Congress leader M Lakshman over his remarks on intelligence failures and security lapses following recent Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 people. State BJP spokesperson MG Mahesh on Saturday announced that the party will pursue sedition charges against Lakshman for making "baseless and inflammatory" comments while country is in mourning. Addressing a press conference in Mysuru, Mahesh criticised Lakshman for politicising the tragedy and accused him of lacking moral standing to question the Union government. Mahesh also claimed the number of officials in Pakistani High Commission has been cut from 55 to 30, and Wagah-Attari border is being closed as part of India's retaliatory measures. BJP MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar also criticised Congress, stating party has no moral ground to comment on security failures. *—Salar News*

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah's stand on Pahalgam terror attack draws BJP criticism **PHOTO: ANI**

CM: No to war, yes to security after Pahalgam attack

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday expressed concern over the Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 people, calling it a "security lapse" and stressing the need for peace over war with Pakistan.

"We are not in favour of war. Instead, the Centre must tighten security in Kashmir to prevent such incidents," he said. The Chief Minister confirmed Karnataka will comply with the Centre's directive to deport Pakistani nationals and gather information on those residing across the state — mainly in Bengaluru.

Siddaramaiah also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for skipping the all-party meeting held after the terror strike. "While the nation mourned, the Prime Minister was busy with electioneering in Bihar. He is fooling people," he remarked.

BJP strongly criticised Siddaramaiah's comments, with Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka accusing him of politicising a national tragedy. Ashoka said the Chief Minister lacked understanding and should instead focus on identifying and deporting illegal immigrants, including those from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Rohingya communities. *—PTI*

MONEY-LAUNDERING PROBE

ED nabs woman in cheating case

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested a woman from Bengaluru, who claimed proximity with various "high-profile" politicians, as part of a money-laundering probe against her for allegedly cheating people by promising them high returns against gold, cash and bank deposits.

Aishwarya Gowda, 33, was arrested on 24 April and a special court remanded her to ED's custody for 14 days.

The ED also conducted searches at 14 locations in Karnataka, including one linked to Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni.

"Incriminating" documents related to money-laundering activities, digital devices and Rs 2.25 crore in cash were seized during the searches.

Kulkarni, however, denied of there being financial dealings between him and Gowda.

Gowda, her husband and others allegedly hatched a criminal conspiracy to "cheat" several individuals by taking gold, cash and funds through bank accounts from them and promising a "high rate" of return. Various FIRs were filed against them at different police stations in Karnataka.

However, the accused neither returned the money nor gave the promised return. She also threatened the investors of dire consequences in case of further pursuance of the matter by claiming her proximity to politicians.

Her custodial interrogation is under progress.

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had ED's actions against Kulkarni as "political vendetta"

"The ED raids are the outcome of the politics of vengeance and the BJP-led Centre often orders such action. Why doesn't the agency raid properties of BJP leaders?" Siddaramaiah questioned. *—PTI*

Techie held for stabbing student

BENGALURU, 26 APRIL

A 43-year-old software engineer was arrested for allegedly stalking, harassing, and stabbing a college student following her rejection of his advances, according to Banashankari police.

The accused, Srikanth, who resides in Kurubarhalli, JC Nagar, is married with two children. The victim's family previously rented a property from him before moving out. The young woman had previ-

ously alerted Srikanth's wife about his inappropriate behaviour. Srikanth reportedly followed 20-year-old student to multiple locations where he continued to harass her.

On Thursday, he confronted her while she was chatting with a male friend near Deve Gowda Petrol Bunk. When her friend tried to intervene, Srikanth allegedly stabbed the victim with a knife and fled the scene. The injured student later reported the incident, leading to Srikanth's swift arrest by the police after a brief investigation.

Authorities stated that he had been obsessively pursuing her despite her repeated rejections. *—Salar News*

COPS SHOOT AT 2 'ATM ROBBERS' IN KALABURAGI

KALABURAGI, 26 APRIL

In an early morning encounter near Belur Cross Industrial Area on Saturday, Kalaburagi police shot and injured two suspects allegedly involved in a series of interstate ATM robberies.

The accused, Taslim Tasi, 28, and Sharif, 22, both from Haryana, attempted to flee during a foiled ATM robbery. Despite police warnings to surrender, they continued to attack officers, prompting a self-defence response. PSI Basavaraj and CPI Santosh Thattepalli from the Suburban Police Station fired shots, injuring the suspects in their legs.

Kalaburagi Police Commissioner Dr Sharanappa SD told **Salar News** that two weeks ago, the same gang used a gas cutter to steal Rs 18 lakh from an ATM. The police had been tracking their vehicle, a white car, which was identified during night patrols.

Taslim, believed to be the kingpin, has 10 cases against him, while Sharif is linked to three. Two other suspects — Ameer, 25, from Hyderabad and Shahid, 27, from Shikampur, Haryana — were also arrested. Tools, including a gas cutter and the vehicle, were seized.

All four suspects are under investigation for ATM heists across Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan. *—Salar News*

Family fight delays C'ballapur man's cremation by 3 days

C'BALLAPUR, 26 APRIL

The cremation of a 50-year-old man, Kodandappa, was delayed for nearly 72 hours due to a land dispute between family members. Kodandappa, a daily wage labourer, died of a heart attack on Wednesday. His family planned to bury him on land currently under legal dispute, but his brother Nareppa's family objected, claiming ownership of the land.

Despite repeated pleas from villagers and local leaders, neither side relented.

Kodandappa's mother Narayanamma insisted on cremating him on the disputed land, while the opposing family refused to allow it. The body remained in a freezer box outside his home as the deadlock continued.

Tahsildar Anil Kumar visited the village and urged the family to bury the body in the government graveyard, but the family refused.

As tensions escalated, police warned that they would take over cremation duties if an agreement wasn't reached.

Finally, on Friday evening, BN Gangadhar, State Organising Convenor of Dalit Sangharsha Samiti, intervened and persuaded the family to proceed with the burial on an adjacent plot.

Cremation was carried out around 5pm, nearly 70 hours after death, bringing an end to the impasse. *—Salar News*

HC protects IAF officer from cops' action

BENGALURU, 26 APRIL

Karnataka High Court has restrained the Bengaluru city police from initiating any coercive steps against Indian Air Force Wing Commander Shiladitya Bose in a road rage case.

The interim direction was issued on 24 April, following a petition filed by the officer challenging the FIR lodged against him.

It also barred the police from summoning Bose without following proper legal procedure. The chargesheet should not be filed without the court's prior permission.

The incident occurred near CV Raman Nagar on 21 April.

The police had registered a complaint lodged by Bose, alleging he had been assaulted by Vikas Kumar, a call centre employee. Subsequently, a counter-complaint was lodged by Kumar, resulting in a second FIR against the IAF officer. *—Salar News*

ISRO organises science meet on Chandrayaan-4

BENGALURU, 26 APRIL

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has organised a national meeting on the potential aspects of lunar sample science in the context of the forthcoming Chandrayaan-4 mission, which aims at returning lunar samples back to the earth.

The meeting was attended by the lunar science community as well as scientists keen on constraining the remote sensing observations of the lunar surface with ground-truth experiments.

M Ganesh Pillai, ISRO's scientific Secretary emphasized significance, fitting in the overall roadmap of India's lunar exploration, which would lead to India's first human-spaceflight mission to moon by 2040. *—Salar News*

WHO'S AT FAULT?

All students fail PUC exam in 13 Bidar colleges

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BIDAR, 26 APRIL

Of the 13 colleges with zero pass percentage, eight are unaided, four are aided, and one is a government college **PHOTO: X**

Bidar's Pre-University Course (PUC) results raised serious concerns on the quality of education, with 13 out of 173 colleges recording a zero-pass rate.

Of the 18,730 students who appeared for the 2024–25 exams, only 12,608 passed, a pass percentage of 67.31 per cent, placing the district 22nd in the state.

This marks a significant decline from previous years. In 2022–23, Bidar had a 78 per cent pass rate and ranked 18th. Though the pass percentage improved to 81.69 per cent in 2023–24, the district slipped to 19th place. This year, despite being the top performer in the Kalyana Karnataka region, Bidar's ranking and performance dropped sharply, with a 14.38 per cent decline from last year.

Of the 13 colleges with zero pass percentage, eight are unaided, four are aided, and one is a government college.

District Deputy Director of the PU Education Department Chandrakant Shahabadkar told **Salar News** that show-cause notices have been issued to these colleges. After receiving their responses, further action will follow.

Experts and students have pointed to deeper, systemic issues. Economist Kamalakar L Hegde said the shortage of lecturers in government colleges is a major concern. "Students are not receiving the mentorship they need," he said, calling for strict action against underperforming lecturers, including salary penalties. He also stressed the urgency of addressing faculty vacancies across government institutions.

BCom student Gurudas Amadalapada echoed this sentiment, criticising the lack of accountability among faculty. "They earn lakhs in salaries but are not invested in students' futures. Some colleges have few students, no classes, and exist only on paper," he said. The overall performance across colleges paints a bleak picture. Five institutions had pass rates below 10 per cent, and 20 fell under 50 per cent. No aided college crossed the 85 per cent mark. The best among them was Janata Praveen PU College in Santapur (Aurad Taluk), with 82.86 per cent.

Among the 24 government PU colleges, one reported zero results, two had under 10 per cent, and six had below 30 per cent. None exceeded an 80 per cent pass rate, and nearly half failed to cross 50 per cent. In contrast, four unaided colleges reported 100 per cent pass rates, while no government or aided college achieved full results.

Hegde noted that 18 government colleges in Bidar recorded poor results, citing Mehkar Government PU College as an example. With only four students enrolled and both examinees failing, the quality of teaching is in question. Mahesh, whose daughter studies at Naveen PU College, said parents would opt for government colleges if they offered better facilities such as labs, libraries, and sports infrastructure. *——Salar News*

OF 107 UNAIDED PU COLLEGES, THESE 8 HAVE ZERO PASS %

1. Jasmine PU College, Bidar
2. Gulshan PU College, Bidar
3. Shramajeevi PU College, Bidar
4. Viveka PU College, Bidar
5. Hanjala PU College, Bidar
6. Shri Vaijnath Kamthane PU College, Bidar
7. Siraj Ul Uloom PU College, Bidar

Mehkar college's all 4 students fail

Mehkar Government PU College in Bhalki Taluk highlights the challenges facing government institutions. Of the four students enrolled, only two appeared for the exam — both of whom failed. The incident raises serious concerns about the quality of education, faculty availability, and the overall effectiveness of teaching at the college.

PHOTO: X

'I'm India's daughter', says Seema Haider

NOIDA, 26 APRIL

Seema Haider, who made headlines in 2023 for leaving Pakistan to marry her Indian partner, Sachin Meena, is facing potential deportation following the Indian government's suspension of visa services for Pakistani nationals. Haider, who entered India illegally via Nepal with her four children, expressed her fears in a video, pleading with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to allow her to stay. She claims to have adopted Hinduism after her marriage. Haider's lawyer argues that she is no longer a Pakistani citizen due to her marriage, thus exempting her from new visa restrictions. *—PTI*

AAP says Delhi BJP manipulating pollution monitors

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has accused the BJP-led Delhi government of manipulating air pollution figures by strategically installing air quality monitoring systems in greener, less polluted areas. During a press conference, AAP's Delhi chief Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that six new monitoring stations were placed in locations such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to artificially reduce pollution statistics. Bharadwaj claimed that this tactic misleads the public about the real levels of air quality and jeopardises public health. He further alleged that areas known for higher pollution were being ignored or tampered with, distorting the overall pollution data. The issue of air pollution, particularly severe during winter months, has been a contentious topic in the political landscape, especially during the recent Assembly elections where the BJP regained control, winning 48 of the 70 seats.*—PTI*

'Illegal' mazar destroyed in Dehradun

DEHRADUN, 26 APRIL

An allegedly illegally constructed mazar, standing for decades on the campus of Government Doon Medical College and Hospital, Dehradun, was demolished, officials said on Saturday. The structure was removed on Friday night using two JCB excavators. Officials stated that documentary records confirmed the mazar had no legal status. Complaints had been received about the shrine obstructing the movement of hospital visitors, exacerbating an existing space shortage. State Congress vice-president Suryakant Dhasmana said the overnight demolition suggested an intent to 'spread hatred'. He added that the mazar fell under the Waqf Board, and only it could determine its legality. *—PTI*

Four arrested in J'khand anti-terror operation

RANCHI, 26 APRIL

Four individuals allegedly linked to various terrorist organisations were apprehended by the Jharkhand Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) in Dhanbad district on Saturday, an official confirmed. The operation yielded two pistols, 12 cartridges, numerous electronic devices—including mobile phones and laptops—as well as a significant quantity of documents and books connected to banned groups. The ATS launched the operation after receiving intelligence regarding individuals associated with Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), and ISIS, who were reportedly using social media to mislead local youth and promote religious extremism. *—PTI*

100s detained in massive crackdown in J&K

Police raid more than 60 locations in Srinagar; houses of five suspected terrorists demolished

A man walks through debris of the house of Ahsan Ul Haq Sheikh, a suspect in the Pahalgam terror attack, which was razed in a 'mysterious' blast, in Murran area of Pulwama district **PHOTO: PTI**

SRINAGAR, 26 APRIL

Authorities in Kashmir launched a massive crackdown on terrorists and their alleged sympathisers. Officials said they razed homes of the ultras, raided their safe havens and detained hundreds of overground workers on Saturday.

Houses of five terrorists or their associates were demolished in the past 48 hours with officials saying similar action will be taken against others linked to terror activities.

Mysterious blasts blew up the houses of two active terrorists, Aadil Thoker and Asif Sheikh on Thursday night. While Thoker is named as one of the three terrorists involved in the Pahalgam attacks, Sheikh's involvement is not yet established, but hasn't been ruled out, officials said.

Security forces rounded up hundreds of overground workers (OWGs) and their supporters in four south Kashmir districts.

One alleged OWG was killed in firing by terrorists during one such operation in Bandipora on Friday, officials said. Altaf Lalli was allegedly killed when security forces took him to a terrorist hideout in the Kulnar area of Bandipora after he pointed out the location of the ultras. Two policemen were also injured in the firing, the officials said.

On Saturday, the action shifted to Srinagar where more than 60 raids were carried out at more than a dozen places.

"Police aim to dismantle the terrorist ecosystem by identifying and taking legal action against individuals engaged in such anti-national and criminal activities," a police officer said.

In Anantnag district, search operations are carried out round-the-clock as security forces step up vigilance. *—PTI*

Police bust terrorist hideout, seize arms cache

SRINAGAR, 26 APRIL

A huge cache of arms and ammunition was seized as security forces busted a terrorist hideout in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Saturday, police said. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, a search operation launched by the security forces in the forested area of Sedori Nala, Mushtaqabad Machil (the Samsha Behak forest region), in the north Kashmir district, a police official said. A significant cache of arms and ammunition, including five AK-47 rifles, eight AK-47 magazines, a pistol, a pistol magazine, 660 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, a pistol round and 50 rounds of M4 ammunition, was seized from the site, the official said. *—PTI*

Security personnel display a huge cache of arms and ammunition after a joint operation against terrorists in the forested area of Sedori Nala, Mushtaqabad Machil, in Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir **PHOTO: PTI**

Tourists feel 'safe' in Srinagar, Pahalgam left 'deserted'

SRINAGAR, 26 APRIL

Amid heightened security, tourists in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar say they feel safe and welcomed, crediting the warmth and support of locals.

Dal Lake remained lively with visitors enjoying the picturesque landscape.

"I don't feel good about leaving today. I've had a great time here. The hoteliers have supported us throughout our stay. We felt no fear, and locals have been welcoming. Tourists must visit -- there is no fear as such," said Vikram Bhai Vyas, a tourist from Gujarat's Vadodara.

Another tourist, Bakul Sharma, who came to Srinagar on 21 April, said, "We feel completely safe. There are no issues. There is no fear. People planning a visit should come."

However, visuals from Pahalgam's Baisaran valley -- the site of the attack -- tell a different story. Once teeming with tourists, the area now shows sparse movement, limited to security forces. *—PTI*

Govt to study how to use Pak's water

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Centre is planning to undertake a study to look into ways to maximise the use of the quantum of water from the three rivers that Pakistan had earlier used under the Indus Water Treaty, officials said.

The proposal was made at a high-level meeting on Friday chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah that discussed the future course of action on the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, which has been kept in abeyance following the Pahalgam terror attack.

Under the World Bank-brokered treaty, India was granted exclusive rights to the water of the eastern rivers -- the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi -- amounting to an average annual flow of about 33 million acre-feet (MAF). The water of the western rivers -- the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab -- with an average annual flow of around 135 MAF, were largely allocated to Pakistan.

After the Indus Water Treaty was held in abeyance, Home Minister Amit Shah held a meeting to plan how to use the excess water **PHOTO: ANI**

The government is now looking at ways to utilise the water of the western rivers.

After Friday's high-level meeting, Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil asserted that the government is working on a strategy to ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan.

"We will ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan from India," the Jal Shakti Minister said after the meeting.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has issued a slew of directives, with Shah adding suggestions during the meeting.Sources said the government is working on a long-term plan to ensure the effective implementation of its decisions.

Experts have highlighted the lack of infrastructure that may limit India's capability to completely utilise the water. *—PTI*

A BSF jawan checks documents of Pakistani nationals as they arrive at the Integrated Check Post at the Attari-Wagah border **PHOTO: PTI**

States deport Pakistani nationals

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

New Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh are among the states and Union Territories enforcing a directive from the Indian government to deport Pakistani nationals residing in India on short-term visas.

In Maharashtra, 55 Pakistani individuals have been instructed to leave the country by the deadline of 27 April. The state home department highlighted that these nationals are distributed across various cities, including Nagpur, Thane, and Jalgaon. However, Nashik authorities reported six Pakistani women still residing in the city, though they have yet to receive official instructions regarding their deportation.

In Madhya Pradesh, 228 Pakistani nationals have also been ordered to depart before the 27 April deadline. State officials are coordinating with central authorities to ensure compliance. The Ministry of External Affairs has revoked all existing valid visas for Pakistani nationals, although long-term visas for Hindu Pakistani individuals remain valid.

In Uttar Pradesh, local authorities are monitoring the departure of Pakistani nationals. Four individuals from Prayagraj are set to leave, while two have already departed from Muzaffarnagar. Officials are paying close attention to those on long-term visas, with most having applied for Indian nationality.

The Delhi government too instructed the Delhi police to locate Pakistani nationals illegally residing in the city and coordinate their deportation with relevant agencies.

Residents have been urged to report any information regarding overstayers to the nearest police station, reinforcing the importance of this operation as "national duty." *—PTI/ANI*

Assam: 13 arrested over 'Pro-Pak' online posts

GUWAHATI, 26 APRIL

At least 14 people have been arrested in Assam so far for making 'seditious comments' in the wake of the Pahalgam attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

Sarma stated that if necessary, the detainees could be charged under the National Security Act (NSA). 'Bharat and Pakistan are enemy nations, and must remain so,' he told reporters at a BJP event. He warned that anyone making anti-India remarks would face arrest, adding that authorities are monitoring social media for such activity.

One person was detained in Sribhumi district for posting 'Pakistan Zindabad' on Facebook, while two others were arrested in Cachar district for similar offences.

AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested on sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan, in Nagaon district, Assam **PHOTO: PTI**

Previously, opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam and another individual were apprehended, along with six others from different districts including Silchar, Hailakandi, Morigaon, Nagaon, Sivasagar, Barpeta and Biswanath.

Sarma asserted that Assam would not tolerate any expression of support for Pakistan. *—PTI*

Bihar cops briefly detain 2 suspects, later clear them

PATNA, 26 APRIL

Bihar police on Saturday briefly detained two persons on the basis of inputs that suggested their resemblance to suspects of the Pahalgam terror attack.

Later, both were released after police verified their identities and found no evidence linking them with any terrorist activity.

The alert was triggered following the circulation of sketches of the terrorists involved in the Pahalgam attack released by central agencies.

However, after verifying their identities and background, investigators did not find evidence suggesting the duo were involved in any terrorist activity. *—PTI*

Pak visitors urge govt to 'spare common people'

CHANDIGARH, 26 APRIL

Ensure exemplary punishment for the Pahalgam terror attack perpetrators, but spare the regular folks. That was the common refrain among Pakistani visitors at the Attari-Wagah land route racing to exit India ahead of a short deadline.

India will revoke all visas issued to Pakistani nationals from 27 April and advised Indians residing in Pakistan to return home at the earliest. Medical visas are valid till 29 April.

"I came after 10 years but still couldn't attend my niece's wedding ceremony," said a visibly upset Baskari, a Karachi resident who had come to Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur along with her husband, Mohd Rasheed

"Those behind the terror attack should be severely punished, but spare the common people. Terrorists have nothing to do with religion. Common people on both sides love each other," Rasheed said.

Another Pakistani national thanked his stars that his mother's treatment in India was over just a couple of days ago.

Bali Ram from Ghotki in Pakistan's northern Sindh said he was visiting his three daughters in Raipur when the news of the attack broke.

"I came on 5 April but now have to rush back. Those who carried out the act should be punished, but what in the fault of innocent tourists?" Ram asked.

Daulat from Karachi was in Jodhpur on a 45-day visa for a wedding. "Whatever happened is not good. This should not have happened," she said while dragging a few trolley suitcases towards the exit gate.

Similarly, an elderly man from Rawalpindi said he had come to Lucknow for a kin's wedding but had to cut short the trip now.

At least 229 Pakistani nationals returned home through the Attari-Wagah land route, while 392 Indian nationals also returned back. *—PTI*

TO STAY OR NOT TO STAY?

Anxiety grips Pakistani Hindu refugees

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Gripped with uncertainty, Pakistani Hindu refugees at Delhi's Majnu Ka Tila fear for their future. India announced on Thursday that all visas issued to Pakistani nationals would be revoked from 27 April.

While the government later clarified that Long-Term Visas granted to Hindu Pakistani nationals will remain valid, many refugees are anxious as their applications for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 are still being processed.

Sona Das, President of the Hindu refugee community at Majnu Ka Tila, said several families have been living in Delhi for years. However, the police recently asked the refugees to submit their documents for verification, he said.

"All relevant documents were collected, but people are nervous about what might happen next," he added.

Krishan Lal, another resident of the refugee camp, said he is worried about his family. "My wife, children and brother applied for Indian citizenship, but it hasn't been granted yet," Lal said.

"I don't know if their visas will now be cancelled or if they will be allowed to stay," he added.

Many Hindu Pakistanis said they had no home to return to in Pakistan, amid the lack of clarity over their visa status **PHOTO: ANI**

Kanhaiya, who runs a small tea stall in Majnu Ka Tila, said he has no home to return to.

"There is no one left for us in Pakistan. If we are asked to leave Delhi, we will have nowhere to go and no way to survive," he said.

"In the past two months, 10 to 12 new families have come here from Pakistan," Dayal Das, who also heads a refugee camp, said.

- Although the Centre said that Hindu Pakistanis with LTVs are exempt from the mass visa revokes, many were concerend over the frequent policing and the lack of long term clarity

Reshma, a mother of two, said her children have just started going to school nearby. She dreams of giving them a better future in India. "We had started feeling hopeful when some people here received citizenship," she said. "Now, with document checks happening, we don't know whether we will be allowed to stay."

Earlier, on 11 March, the Centre had granted Indian citizenship to 186 Pakistani Hindus under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

7 die in two separate firework blasts in TN

CHENNAI, 26 APRIL

Two fireworks-related incidents in Tamil Nadu claimed the lives of seven individuals. On Friday night, an accidental firecracker blast near the Draupadi Amman temple in Kanjanaickenpatti village resulted in the deaths of four people, including two boys. The explosion happened when a man attempted to test firecrackers being transported for the temple festival. . In a separate incident on Saturday, three women lost their lives in a massive explosion at a fireworks factory in M Pudupatti, near Sivakasi, with several others sustaining injuries. Officials reported that the charred remains of the deceased were found at the site, while numerous injured women were hospitalised. Both incidents raised concerns over safety protocols. —*PTI*

3 workers killed in firecracker factory explosion in UP

SAHARANPUR, 26 APRIL

A devastating explosion at a firecracker factory in Nihal Khedi village early on Saturday has resulted in the deaths of three workers from severe burn injuries. The blast, which occurred around 4.30am, produced a sound that echoed over a two-kilometre radius, prompting a response from police, a forensic team, and fire services. Three factory operators were taken into police custody as investigations continue into the nature of the firecrackers, despite the factory holding a valid license. Officials are concerned about extensive damage, noting that the building collapsed due to the force of the explosion. Locals flagged the presence of illegal firecracker factories, accusing the authorities of negligence. —*PTI*

6 sanitation workers killed in Gurugram accident

GURUGRAM, 26 APRIL

An accident claimed the lives of six sanitation workers and left five others injured after a pick-up vehicle struck them near Ibrahimbas village on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. The incident occurred around 10am while the workers were conducting maintenance on the expressway. Five workers died at the scene, while the injured were rushed to the hospital, where their condition is critical. Local residents alerted the authorities and assisted in the emergency response. Police have yet to identify the deceased but believe they are from Kheri Kalan village, with one from Jhimrawat village. Investigations into the cause of the accident are underway, with the driver facing potential action. A police officer said that they are reviewing footage. —*PTI*

Multiple T'puram hotels receive bomb threats

T'PURAM, 26 APRIL

Multiple hotels in the state capital received bomb threats via email on Saturday, prompting police to deploy bomb disposal units and sniffer dogs for thorough inspections. An officer from the Cantonment police station reported that inspections were ongoing at all affected hotels, including the Hilton Hotel located in the city centre. "Nothing has been found so far," the officer stated regarding the inspections. Law enforcement is also investigating the origins of the threatening email, which warned of potential IED explosions. This incident follows a series of similar email threats targeting district collectorates and Revenue Divisional Officers' offices across Kerala, as well as the Kerala High Court. All previous threats had been determined to be hoaxes after evaluations by police. —*PTI*

1,000 illegal Bangladeshis detained by cops in Gujarat

It is one of the largest crackdowns in Ahmedabad and Surat

AHMEDABAD, 26 APRIL

At least 1,000 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, including women and children, were detained in Ahmedabad and Surat, Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi said on Saturday. Efforts were underway for their deportation, he added.

At least 890 Bangladeshis were detained in Ahmedabad and 134 in Surat, in what the minister termed as the biggest operation of its kind by the Gujarat police to date.

Sanghavi warned illegal immigrants in Gujarat to surrender before the police on their own accord, or face police crackdown and deportation.

He also threated legal action against people sheltering illegal immigrants.

The minister said, "Many of these people are involved with drug cartels, human trafficking, and as we saw how two out of the four Bangladeshis arrested recently worked in sleeper cells of Al Qaeda. A probe will be conducted into the background of these Bangladeshis and their activities in Gujarat."

He said arrangements were made "to complete all the procedures for their deportation as soon as possible".

"We will also investigate fake documents they used to reach different parts of the country and Gujarat, and action will be taken against those who created the fake documents," he added.

He said the detainees used fake documents obtained from West Bengal before coming to Gujarat. He added that Gujarat would provide proof to West Bengal as to how the detainees obtained fake documents.

Sanghavi said the police were instructed to take action against illegal immigrants, and a clear order was given to Pakistani nationals to leave Gujarat.

Ahmedabad Director General of Police (DGP) Vikas Sahay said the operation was conducted simultaneously in Ahmedabad and Surat around 3am on Saturday.

"The process of their deportation will be carried out at the earliest in coordination with the Central government and Border Security Force (BSF)," he said. —*PTI*

Police take away more than 450 allegedly illegal immigrants after combing operation in different localities in Ahmedabadad, on Saturday

PHOTO: PTI

UPHOLDS HC VERDICT

Panchayat candidates must disclose pending cases: SC

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

The Supreme Court upheld Himachal Pradesh High Court' decision, which said candidates contesting panchayat elections were obligated to disclose information about the pending cases against them.

A bench of justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh made the remarks while affirming the decision of the Himachal Pradesh High Court to uphold the dismissal of the 'pradhan' (head) of the Pangna village panchayat in Mandi district.

The High Court on 16 October, 2024, held that the concealment of material facts by the petitioner amounted to "corrupt practice" under the provisions of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, and was another valid ground to declare his election null and void.

The bench noted that the misconduct attributed to the petitioner, Basant Lal, did not require reference to any provision of the act, rules or regulations.

"He deliberately filed a false affidavit/undertaking concealing the factum of pendency of criminal case against him. The concealment of that material fact was a valid ground to annul his election," the bench noted. —*PTI*

Mother of teen driver granted bail in Porsche crash case

PUNE, 26 APRIL

The mother of a 17-year-old boy involved in the fatal Porsche crash in Pune, which claimed the lives of two IT professionals, was released from jail on Saturday, following the Supreme Court's approval of her interim bail. This marks her as the first among ten accused in the blood sample-swapping case to secure bail. The incident occurred in the early hours of 19 May last year, when the allegedly intoxicated teenager's Porsche struck two men on a motorcycle in Kalyani Nagar. She is accused of swapping her blood sample with her son's to hide his inebriation at the time of the accident.

Upon granting bail, the Supreme Court instructed a Pune court to establish specific conditions. Prosecutor Shishir Hiray sought restrictions on her residing in Pune. However, the court denied the request, opting instead for standard bail conditions. These include a bond of Rs 1 lakh, the submission of her passport, and mandatory mobile location sharing. Additionally, she must report to the police every Wednesday and is prohibited from disclosing her identity for three months. —*PTI*

ED uncovers Rs 1,000 cr land scam in Goa

PANAJI, 26 APRIL

PHOTO: ANI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has launched investigations into a significant land scam in Goa, involving fraudulent transfers of prime land valued at Rs 1,000 crore. Searches were conducted across multiple locations on Thursday and Friday, following intelligence reports that identified Rohan Harmalkar as the key mastermind behind the scheme.

According to the ED, Harmalkar and his associates orchestrated an extensive conspiracy to illegally seize land owned by rightful owners using fraudulent methods such as impersonation, the creation of fake documents, and tampering with revenue records. Harmalkar notably ran as an Independent candidate in the 2022 Goa Legislative Assembly elections from the Cumbharjua constituency.

The investigations revealed that properties, originally owned by individuals and family estates, were unlawfully sold without consent, resulting in financial and legal turmoil for the victims. During the operations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, the ED discovered incriminating property documents, including forged title deeds, indicating manipulation of land records in tourist hotspots like Anjuna, Arpora, and Assagao.

The ED seized original documents of immovable properties worth over Rs 600 crore and is actively tracing the money trail to identify additional beneficiaries and the involvement of government officials in these illicit transactions. Further investigation is ongoing. —*PTI*

NEET aspirant's suicide shocks Kota community

KOTA, 26 APRIL

Ranjit Sharma, a carpenter from Tuglakabad in Delhi, was inconsolable outside a local mortuary, awaiting the body of his son, Roshan, a 23-year-old preparing for the NEET-UG exam. Just days prior, Ranjit and his wife visited Kota to bring Roshan home, but he declined to leave.

Three weeks before the 4 May exam, Roshan informed his parents and sister that he intended to take another year to prepare. Despite scoring between 550-600 marks in mock tests at his coaching institute, he tragically took his own life shortly after they left. —*PTI*

Rahman, 'PS2' producers fined ₹2 cr in copyright case

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Delhi High Court has ordered renowned music composer AR Rahman and the producers of the film 'Ponniyin Selvan 2' to deposit Rs 2 crore with the court due to a copyright infringement claim concerning the Junior Dagar brothers' classical rendition of 'Shiv Stuti.'

Justice Prathiba M Singh determined that Rahman's song 'Veera Raja Veera' is "not just inspired but is, in fact, identical" to 'Shiv Stuti' in its musical composition, violating the rights of the original composers.

The court compelled the filmmakers to include a credit to the Junior Dagar Brothers—Late Ustad N Faiyazuddin Dagar and Late Ustad Zahiruddin Dagar—in the film's listings on OTT platforms, as well as awarding Rs 2 lakh in costs to the Dagar family.

Ustad Faiyaz Wasifuddin Dagar, who holds the copyright for the original compositions, argued that the defendants unlawfully replicated 'Shiv Stuti.'

The court noted that if the interim order was not granted, the original composers' creative and moral rights would suffer irreparable harm.

Rahman's legal team contended that 'Shiv Stuti,' being based on the dhrupad genre, fell within the public domain and lacked copyright protection. —*PTI*

'Uncooperative' Rana grilled for 8 hours

NEW DELHI, APRIL 26

Mumbai police crime branch officials questioned alleged 26/11 attack mastermind Tahawwur Hussain Rana at the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) office in Delhi for eight, officials said on Saturday.

According to police officials, Rana was questioned for eight hours on Wednesday, during which he gave evasive answers and did not cooperate.

Rana, a Pakistani-Canadian accused of terrorism, is a former military doctor with an alleged history of involvement in terror-related activities. He was recently extradited from the United States to India.

Rana's role in the Mumbai terror attacks came to light during the interrogation of his childhood friend and co-accused David Headley.

Earlier, the Patiala House Court of Delhi dismissed a plea filed by Rana, seeking permission to speak with his family over the phone. —*ANI*

FIIT JEE 'siphoned off' money from students: ED

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The ED claimed that FIIT JEE diverted funds worth at least Rs 250.2 crore for personal use, while faculty remain unpaid

PHOTO: X

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday alleged that FIIT JEE coaching institute collected more than Rs 200 crore as fee from thousands of students but did not deliver the educational service indicating "serious" financial irregularities and siphoning of funds.

The federal probe agency said in a statement that it seized Rs 10 lakh in cash, jewellery worth Rs 4.89 crore after it conducted searches on 24 April.

It raided premises including FIIT JEE Director DK Goel's, other executives of the company and their offices.

The raids covered seven premises in Noida, Delhi and Gurugram.

The ED probe found that FIIT JEE collected about Rs 250.2 crore from a total of 14,411 students for four academic sessions between 2025-26 to 2028-29.

The funds were allegedly diverted for personal and unauthorised use, while faculty salaries remained unpaid, the ED said.

FIIT JEE or its promoters could not be contacted.

The ED case, filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), stems from multiple police FIRs registered by the parents in Noida, Lucknow, Delhi, Bhopal and other cities.

As a result, 32 coaching centres located across Ghaziabad, Lucknow, Meerut, Noida, Bhopal, Gwalior, Indore, Faridabad and Gurugram apart from those in Mumbai and Delhi and other places, were abruptly shut down, causing widespread distress to around 15,000 students and parents, it said.

The agency said it seized "incriminating" documents and digital devices during the searches that indicate financial irregularities.

A preliminary analysis of these material suggests a "systematic" scheme to "siphon off" funds. —*PTI*

FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED

Class-11 girl starts NGO to raise eye-care awareness

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

PHOTO: CHATGPT

Moved by a fifth-grade girl's struggle to read a blackboard at a Delhi event, a 16-year-old school girl was inspired to float an NGO with her friends to create eye care awareness among underprivileged sections of society.

"In a country where millions struggle silently with undiagnosed or untreated vision problems, I want to light their way," said Sanjana Chauhan, a Class-11 student in Noida and founder of the NGO ,Drishti.

The incident prompted Sanjana research vision impairment with her friends. They then visited one of the most affected groups of industrial workers -- the bangle manufacturers of Uttar Pradesh's Firozabad.

"Intense heat, sparks from machinery, and particulate matter wreak havoc on workers' eyesight," she said.

"A 2022 study on Firozabad's glass industry workers revealed that more than 35 per cent staff suffered from refractive errors while 15 per cent experienced chronic eye dryness," Saloni, a student and a volunteer for Drishti, said.

Sanjana realised that the problem wasn't just medical but social, economic and systemic, leading her to float the idea of Drishti. She was also surprised to find that in 80 per cent of these cases, the condition is either preventable or treatable.

"From poor eye hygiene, polluted environments, excessive screen time to unsafe working conditions," Kavya Chaudhary, one of Sanjana's friends and member of Drishti, said was responsible.

Today, Drishti collaborates with top healthcare companies such as Apollo Hospitals to organise free eye check-up camps, medicines, eye drops and spectacles to industrial workers and poor families.

"For many, the first eye check-up results in both alarming as well as life-changing revelations," Sanjana said. —*PTI*

Kerala historian MGS Narayanan dies at 93

T'PURAM, 26 APRIL

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

MGS Narayanan, eminent historian, academic, and former chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, passed away at his residence in Malaparamba, Kozhikode, aged 93, due to age-related ailments. He is survived by his wife, son, and daughter.

A towering figure in Indian historiography, Narayanan headed the Department of History at the University of Calicut from 1976 to 1990 and chaired the ICHR from 2001 to 2003. His PhD thesis, 'Perumals of Kerala', is regarded as a seminal work on Kerala's socio-political history between the 9th and 12th centuries.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressed his condolences, noting that Narayanan resisted both left- and right-wing attempts to distort history.

Educated at the University of Madras, Narayanan also taught at Guruvayurappan College and later led the post-graduate history department in Calicut. Trained in epigraphy, he was fluent in Malayalam, English, Tamil, Sanskrit, and ancient scripts.

Beyond academia, he was a poet, literary critic, and social commentator, leaving an enduring mark on Kerala's intellectual and cultural life. —*PTI*

TOURISTS IN SRINAGAR

Tourists visit the Dal Lake, in Srinagar, on 26 April a few days after the Pahalgam terror attack that left at least 26 people, mostly tourists, dead. They said that despite the attack, locals make them feel safe ***PHOTO: PTI***

Kashmir pony 'wallahs' guided visitors to safety

A pony "wallah" who laid down his life trying to save visitors to his homeland, a guide who rescued a family of 11 and countless locals are among those who added another dimension to Kashmir's hospitality when terror struck Pahalgam on a calm Tuesday afternoon.

In what is the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019, terrorists opened fire in Baisaran, a popular tourist spot in the upper reaches of Pahalgam in Kashmir, killing 26 people, mostly holidayers from other states.

As tourists and families of victims from across the country reached home from Kashmir and outrage spread, stories of locals helping those who were stuck in the terrifying ordeal flooded in.

When the initial list of victims was made public, Syed Adil Hussain Shah's was the only name of a local. The story of his bravery made thousands, including Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, attend his funeral on Wednesday in Pahalgam's Hapatnard village.

Ponywallah Syed Adil Hussain Shah died trying to save tourists during the attack ***PHOTO: PTI***

Families of Kaustubh Ganbote and Santosh Jagdale, two victims, who stood face to face with the armed terrorists, the 30-year-old pony "wallah" confronted them asking why they were killing innocent people. In courageous attempt to protect tourist, the young man tried to snatch away the weapon. Shah succumbed to three bullets to the chest.

Asavari Jagdale, who lost her father Santosh Jagdale and uncle Kaustubh Ganbote, recalled being helped by another pony rider as they escaped the mayhem. "I gathered courage and managed to escape with my mother and aunt. While coming down, my mother suffered leg injuries. A pony rider offered us support and hope. He gave us a pony ride to our driver," Asavari, who had travelled from Pune, recounted.

She added that her cab driver and pony ride operator were "like angels sent from God who stood by her at the time of the attack". "The pony ride operator did not leave us behind, he was with us. He rescued my aunt, mother and me from the spot," she told PTI. The cab driver remained in touch even after she left Srinagar and "offered to help in every possible way".

"He asked us to tell him any help we need, whether it was money. He is a driver who still wants to help us. He was crying on the call and also when I was leaving from Srinagar. I thanked him, I told him that because of his presence I did not feel lonely. He cried saying that he is sad for my loss. They were like angels sent by God."

Nazakat Ahmed Shah, a cousin of Shah, was also at the venue of the massacre and was instrumental in saving the lives of 11 tourists, including three children.

The 28-year-old had taken four couples and three children to Baisaran on the last leg of their Kashmir trip. Just before the group was about to leave the location, the sound of gunfire alerted Nazakat who fell to the ground with two of the children.

"My first concern was the safety of the tourist families. I took Lucky's kid and another child and lay down on the ground. The area was fenced so it was not easy to escape. I noticed a small opening and asked the families to move out through that opening. They asked me to save the children first. I slipped through it with the two kids, and ran towards town," Nazakat said.

After depositing the children in a safe place, he returned to the spot and escorted the others out safely.

"Thanks to Allah, I took all our 11 guests safely to Pahalgam," he said.The story of Nazakat's selfless act came out when Arvind Agrawal, one of the tourists, posted pictures of him and his daughter with Shah on his social media handle.

An indelible face of compassion above all else was tourist guide Sajad Ahmad Bhat.

Videos of him scurrying down the mountainside with a child on his back were circulated widely and many wanted to know who this brave, helpful man was. When he reached the meadow, many were crying for help.

Terming the attack a blot on humanity, he said all of Kashmir is in mourning. "They should have instead killed us, it should not have happened to them (the tourists). We want to tell all Indians that we stand with them... We are all Indians."

There were those who were saved by cautious locals.—*PTI*

SALAR سالار بنگلور

Pahalgam attack triggers new wave of polarisation

The return of four coffins from Kashmir to Bengal — three deceased of the Pahalgam terror attack and one soldier killed in Udhampur — has not only stirred grief, but also ignited a volatile mix of religion, politics and emotion — deepening polarisation and marking a turning point in the state's identity politics.

With the 2026 assembly elections less than a year away, the killings have swiftly taken on a political charge, threatening to become the emotional nucleus around which competing narratives and electoral strategies will revolve.

The brutal killing of tourists Bitan Adhikari, Samir Guha and Manish Ranjan Mishra in Kashmir, allegedly after being asked to reveal their religion, has sent shockwaves through the state. The chilling nature of these targeted killings has thrust the politics of religious identity into the spotlight, with the faith of the victims now becoming a potent political tool.

As parties scramble to frame the narrative through religion, nationalism and victimhood, the deaths have transformed into a new battleground in Bengal's fierce political contest. The fourth coffin — of soldier Jhontu Ali Sheikh from Nadia killed in a separate ambush in Udhampur — has further complicated the emotional and political discourse, as martyrdom and terror are increasingly viewed through communal prisms.

The invocation of religious identity following the attacks has signalled a shift in Bengal's political choreography — one that observers say is aligned with the BJP's "ideological thrust" and the TMC's "appeasement politics".

"This isn't just a story of terror and tragedy. It's about the religious identity of the dead. We are now witnessing a contest of competing narratives, shaped by identity and political stakes," political scientist at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Maidul Islam, told PTI. What unfolded at Kolkata airport on Wednesday evening highlighted the intensity of the moment.

As the coffins arrived, Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, and a large contingent of BJP leaders staged an emotionally charged appearance at the cargo terminal.

With folded hands and bowed head, Adhikari knelt beside a coffin, touched his forehead to it, and cradled Bitan's infant son. He solemnly declared, "They were killed because they were Hindus," and urged the grieving widow to recount her version of events.

TMC, though present at the airport through leaders like Firhad Hakim and Arup Biswas, appeared momentarily caught off-guard by BJP's theatrics. Biswas met Bitan's family and Hakim visited the home of another victim.

TMC also sought to highlight the sacrifice of Jhontu Ali Sheikh, stressing that martyrdom knows no religion. But BJP struck back sharply.

"The TMC is trying to equate a terrorist attack with the death of a soldier," said state BJP spokesperson Keya Ghosh. "In Kashmir, just like during the Murshidabad riots, Hindus were killed by Islamic terrorists after identifying their religion. Sheikh died in an ambush. Both are not the same. Islamic terrorism is a reality; the sooner we accept it, the better," she said.

The remark laid bare the deeper ideological clash: while BJP seeks to frame the killings through the lens of religious identity, the TMC is attempting to dilute that narrative by emphasising a broader idea of national sacrifice. TMC veteran Sougata Roy, however, rejected the BJP's framing.

"This is clearly a security and intelligence failure. The BJP is using this incident to stir communal sentiments ahead of the Bihar elections and next year's Bengal polls," he told PTI. But BJP remains unwavering.

Political analysts believe the Pahalgam killings have given the BJP's Hindutva plank a significant emotional push — echoing the post-Pulwama sentiment of 2019, though with a sharper, more divisive edge.

"What happened in Kashmir is now being fought over in Bengal's streets by the TMC and the BJP. The focus on religious identity is only going to deepen existing communal divides ahead of the 2026 assembly polls," he said.

Another analyst echoed the sentiment. "The politics around the religious identity of the corpses will sharpen the state's fault lines."

From the CAA-NRC protests to recurring incidents of communal violence in districts like Murshidabad, West Bengal has seen an uptick in religious tensions over the past few years.

Both the TMC and the BJP have capitalised on these fissures, portraying themselves as protectors of their respective vote bases — Muslims and Hindus.

The Pahalgam episode may further deepen these divides, especially if the religious identity of the dead continues to dominate the narrative around terrorism and martyrdom. —*PTI*

Army personnel carry the mortal remains of slain paratrooper Jhantu Ali Sheikh on arrival at his native village Patharghata in Tehatta of Nadia, West Bengal ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

BJP, clean your windows before commenting on our wall: Surjewala

Randeep Singh Surjewala

The BJP government at the Centre is the one responsible for the back breaking price rise.

There's an old tale here about how a newly married woman takes to staring at the neighbours wall through a window in her marital home. She would then comment to her husband about how dirty their neighbours wall was. It was a repeated exercise until one day she remarked to her husband that the wall was finally clean. Her husband commented and said; that wall was always clean, you just finally cleaned the window you were looking out of.

This simple yet poignant tale is befitting of the BJP in the State. Instead of cleaning their own windows, they've taken to saying our walls are dirty. I believe they are in denial about the state of their windows, so have taken to commenting on our walls as a way to stay relevant through their Jan Akrosh Rally. But if the BJP leadership took a moment to assess their own reality, the whole BJP machinery including BY Vijendra, R Ashok and the entire leadership wouldn't even need to take out this farce of a rally in the State.

The state BJP made Price Rise the issue for their entire Jan Akrosh Campaign but as irony would have it, within days of its start, the BJP government at the Centre raised LPG prices by Rs 50 a cylinder. Alas, the BJP can't fight against this injustice to the common man.

Our congress government in Karnataka through its five guarantees is giving approximately Rs 55,000 per family every year. This has increased their economic situation and purchasing power. None of the previous BJP governments, either here or in the Centre, have ever dreamt of empowering people in such a manner.

We've also ensured that even in cases of price rises, which were essential, the burden is minimal. For example: even with the increase in milk prices to support our farmers, our prices are still one of the lowest in the country. Even such small increases are outweighed by the benefits of the guarantees being transferred to the people of the state.

BJP, which used these minimal price increases in Karnataka as the basis of their protest, should have the courage to ask their central BJP leadership about price rises.

Burden of price rise

The price of essentials, fuel and inputs rose in the past 11 years at astronomical rates, which the BJP's Jan Akrosha rally will never talk about. Irony is, the BJP which claimed to be fighting for Kannadigas against price rise, is now justifying the fuel price hike. They lauded the PM for his trip to America, but didn't have a single word to say when even the trip didn't stop President Trump from imposing tariffs on us. But the BJP has nothing to say about this.

The extortion from people by arbitrarily increasing the excise duty on petrol & diesel by BJP government has severely hurt the common people. In fact, your government has earned over 34 lakh crore in last 10 years by taxing the petroleum sector. In the year 2023-24 alone, the balance sheets of the seven big oil companies such as Reliance Industries Ltd, Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum, Oil India, GAIL India, ONGC, reflect that they earned a profit of Rs 2.29 lakh crores. This is at the expense of the common man.

May we remind the union BJP government about fleecing of common man by raising of excise duty. When congress party demitted power at the Centre in May 2014, the excise duty on petrol was Rs 9.20 per litre and on diesel was Rs 3.46 per litre. As on today, excise duty on petrol is Rs 19.90 per litre and on diesel is Rs 15.80 per litre. This is a shocking 457 per cent hike in excise duty on diesel and 216 per cent hike on excise duty in petrol.

The biggest proof of cheating of people by the BJP government lies in the fact that crude oil prices have fallen between 30 per cent to 40 per cent compared to the year 2013-14, but government of India is profiteering from it.

In April-May 2014, when congress government demitted power at the Centre, the crude oil price was USD 108 per barrel. The crude oil prices today are USD 62 per barrel. All through last one decade, the crude oil prices have averaged between USD 70 to USD 80 per barrel. The benefit of the reduced crude oil prices is not being passed on to the consumer by the union BJP government. If it was done, the price of petrol and diesel would by Rs 10 to Rs 15 per litre cheaper. This would reduce the inflation and benefit the common people. The question is why is union BJP government profiteering at the cost of the common man.

That to add insult to the injury, the union BJP government has increased the excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 2 per litre with effect from 7 April, 2025, If this excise duty had not increased, it would have let to reduction of prices of petrol and diesel by minimum of Rs 2 per litre. By taking away this meagre benefit, the BJP-NDA government has put an additional burden of over Rs 40,000 crore on people, out of which over Rs 4,500 crore is on people of Karnataka alone.

In Karnataka, the annual sale of petrol is 692.43 crore litres and of diesel is 1613.66 crore litres. Even if, the price would have been reduced by Rs 2 per litre, the benefit to consumers would be Rs 4,504 crores. By taking it away, union BJP government has imposed this additional burden of Rs 4,504 crores on people of Karnataka. If we add the additional burden on Kannadigas by way of gas cylinder hike, the total extra burden comes to Rs 4,504 crore+Rs 515.49 crore = 5,019.49 crores.

The central government has gained 36.85 lakh crores from taxation on fuel, but unlike our guarantees where we transfer the benefit to the people, the BJP has held on to this. But what is the BJP even doing with this money? In the past year, the cost of a veg meal has increased by 57 per cent. The price of dal, cooking oil, vegetables and other essential commodities have skyrocketed. Healthcare is 14 per cent more expensive. The much touted uniform regime of GST has increased the tax on every item under the sun. Even insurance has 18 per cent GST on it while even farm implements now have the tax burden on it.

This BJP government is so draconian that they extorted 43,500 crores from poor citizens for non maintenance of balance in their accounts from 2018 to 2024.

Where's the battle for fair devolution?

The state gives the Centre close to 4.50 lakh crores as its share of taxes, but the Centre through devolution gives us a mere 15,000 crores in return which means for every rupee Karnataka sends, we get a pittance in the form of 13 paisa. All our demands for greater devolution have fallen on deaf ears.

Sadly, none of the BJPs MPs from Karnataka have said a word against this injustice to their state. Where is the Jan Akrosha then? The Jan Akrosha battle needs to be for the betterment of the people and not just political benefit. But the fact is, no matter how many rallies the BJP and JDS take out, the people are with the congress and the sooner they realise that, the better for them.

Randeep Singh Surjewala is AICC General Secretary in charge of Karnataka

Front row from left, French first lady Brigitte Macron, French President Emmanuel Macron, Finland's President Alexander Stubb, US President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump attend the funeral of Pope Francis in St Peter's Square at the Vatican on Saturday; Former US president Joe Biden, his wife Jill arrive and Britain's Prince William at St. Peter's Square **PHOTOS: PTI**

World bids farewell to the 'People's Pope'

The coffin was welcomed by homeless, migrants, transgenders and prisoners in a tribute to Francis

VATICAN CITY, 26 APRIL

Pope Francis was laid to rest on Saturday, following a solemn funeral attended by over 2,50,000 mourners and numerous world leaders in St. Peter's Square, Vatican City. The ceremony highlighted his commitment to the marginalized and his vision of a humble, inclusive Church.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Dean of the College of Cardinals, presided over the Mass, eulogising Francis as a "pope among the people" who reached out to the "most peripheral of the peripheries." Applause erupted as his coffin was carried from St. Peter's Basilica to the Basilica of St. Mary Major, where he was interred in a simple tomb made of Ligurian stone, reflecting his vow of poverty and pastoral identity.

In a departure from tradition, Francis chose to be buried outside the Vatican, in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, near Rome's main train station. This decision underscored his deep connection to the poor and his Jesuit roots. Forty individuals from marginalised communities, including prisoners, migrants, and transgender people, greeted the coffin upon its arrival, symbolising the pope's lifelong commitment to social justice.

The funeral drew an estimated 2,50,000 mourners, with many queuing for hours to pay their respects. The ceremony was broadcast worldwide, allowing Catholics and admirers from around the globe to participate in the final farewell to the first Latin American and Jesuit pope.

Pope Francis died on Easter Monday at the age of 88 after suffering a stroke while recovering from pneumonia. His death marks the end of a 12-year papacy characterised by efforts to reform the Church, advocate for the poor, and promote interfaith dialogue. The College of Cardinals is expected to convene in the coming weeks to elect his successor.

- Despite criticisms from some conservative circles, many remembered Francis as a compassionate and unifying figure who advocated for the poor, LGBTQ+ communities, migrants, and interfaith dialogue. His final resting place bears only the Latin word "Franciscus," encapsulating his legacy of humility and simplicity.

Among the dignitaries present were US President Donald Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Prince William represented the British royal family, while other European royalty, including Denmark's Queen Mary, Spain's King Felipe and Queen Letizia, and Belgium's King Philippe and Queen Mathilde, were also in attendance.

Despite criticisms from some conservative circles, many remembered Francis as a compassionate and unifying figure who advocated for the poor, LGBTQ+ communities, migrants, and interfaith dialogue. His final resting place bears only the Latin word "Franciscus," encapsulating his legacy of humility and simplicity.

As the Vatican prepares for the upcoming conclave to elect a new pope, the legacy of Pope Francis continues to inspire discussions on the future direction of the Catholic Church. *—PTI*

A crowd of 2 lakh people gathered in St Peter's Square on Saturday to honour Pope Francis **PHOTO: PTI**

Singapore orders Facebook to block foreigners' posts

SINGAPORE, 26 APRIL

Ahead of the 3 May elections, Singaporean authorities have instructed Meta to restrict access to specific Facebook posts by foreign individuals aiming to influence voters. This includes content from Zulfikar bin Mohamad Shariff, a former Singaporean detainee turned Australian citizen linked to the Islamic State, and Malaysian politician Iskandar Abdul Samad. The posts, critical of the Singaporean government's handling of sensitive religious issues, urged citizens to vote along religious lines. *—PTI*

Pak troops kill 9 terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR, 26 APRIL

In a significant counter-terrorism effort, Pakistan's security forces have killed nine terrorists across two operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to the military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The initial operation, conducted on the night of 23-24 April in Bannu district, resulted in the death of six terrorists following intense gunfire, with four others reported injured. A sanitisation operation is currently in progress to eliminate any remaining threats.In a second operation in the Tirah area of Khyber district, three additional terrorists were neutralised. *—PTI*

Gunmen kill 20 in Nigeria mining town

ABUJA, 26 APRIL

Armed assailants killed at least 20 individuals and injured many more in a mining village in Nigeria's northwestern Zamfara state, according to a rights group. The gunmen, arriving on motorcycles, targeted Gobirawa Chali in the Dan Gulbi district around midday on Thursday, launching a "house-to-house killing spree." The assault began at a gold-mining site where 14 victims were initially reported dead, with more bodies discovered in homes and a mosque. While the motive remains uncertain, bandit groups in the region are notorious for mass killings and kidnappings for ransom. *—PTI*

Ukraine-Russia peace deal close, says Trump

ROME, 26 APRIL

President Donald Trump on Friday called for "very high-level" peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, claiming the two sides are "very close to a deal" to end the three-year war.

Posting on Truth Social shortly after arriving in Rome for Pope Francis' funeral, Trump said his envoy, Steve Witkoff, had met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. "Most of the major points are agreed to," Trump wrote. "Stop the bloodshed, NOW."

The comments followed Trump's controversial statement to Time magazine that "Crimea will stay with Russia," pressuring Ukraine to concede territory. He also demanded President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "IMMEDIATELY" sign a mineral rights deal with the U.S.

Donald Trump **PHOTO: PTI**

Zelenskyy, asked about Trump's Crimea stance, said he would not comment but repeated that recognising Russian control over Ukrainian land is a red line.

While Trump accuses Zelenskyy of stalling peace, European leaders blame Putin, whose forces continue attacking Ukrainian cities. On Friday, a Russian drone killed three civilians in southeastern Ukraine. Just a day earlier, a Russian strike on Kyiv killed 12 and injured 87. Witkoff's Friday meeting with Putin — their fourth since February — lasted three hours. Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov called it "constructive." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov confirmed progress but noted key issues still need "fine-tuning." Trump, speaking before the funeral, said he wants peace "as fast as possible". *—PTI*

President Donald Trump on Saturday also met briefly with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy before Pope Francis' funeral, both the White House and Zelenskyy's office confirmed.
Trump told reporters on Friday as he flew to Rome that he was going to the funeral "out of respect" for the pontiff.

19 states sue Trump over DEI schemes

Concord, 26 April

19 states have filed a federal lawsuit challenging a Trump administration directive aimed at eliminating diversity, equity and inclusion programmes in public schools. The lawsuit filed in Massachusetts by Democratic attorneys general, seeks to block the Department of Education from withholding money based on its directive ordering states to comply with civil rights laws,
including the rejection of "illegal DEI practices."

Singapore: US not ready to cut tariffs

Singapore, 26 April

The US was not ready to lower its 10 per cent tariff on imports from Singapore, but both countries agreed to positively deepen their economic links and discuss the practical way forward.
Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong said on a LinkedIn post on Saturday that he had virtually discussed with US Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick the bilateral ties between the countries. Lutnick acknowledged the excellent trading relationship between Singapore and US.

Iran, US prepare for nuke talks

Muscat, 26 April

Iran and the United States prepared on Saturday to start negotiations in Oman over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, that likely will hinge on its enrichment of uranium.
Immediate specifics on the talks were unavailable.
Araghchi met with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, who had mediated two previous rounds of talks in Muscat and Rome. The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting of sanctions by US

X sues Minnesota over deepfakes ban

Minneapolis, 26 April

X Corp, the social media platform owned by Elon Musk, is challenging the constitutionality of a Minnesota ban on using deepfakes to influence elections and harm candidates, saying it violates First Amendment speech protections. The federal lawsuit contends that the 2023 state law is pre-empted by a 1996 federal statute that shields social media from being held responsible for material posted on their platforms. Minnesota's law imposes criminal penalties, including imprisonment, for disseminating a deepfake video, image or audio if a person knows it's fake, or acts with reckless disregard to its authenticity. Democratic Minnesota Attorney General office was reviewing the lawsuit. X said that its "Community Notes" feature allows users to flag problematic content and its "Authenticity Policy" and "Grok AI" tool provide additional safeguards. *—PTI*

Kim Jong Un **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

N KOREA TOUTS NAVAL DESTROYER, BLAMES US FOR TIES

SEOUL, 26 APRIL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has unveiled a new 5,000-ton naval destroyer, claiming it marks a significant advancement in his military's nuclear capabilities and operational range. The launching ceremony took place on Friday at Nampo's western port, as reported by state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Kim asserted that the development of the destroyer is a response to perceived threats from the United States and its Asian allies, who have intensified joint military exercises amid escalating tensions surrounding North Korea's nuclear programme. He announced that acquiring a nuclear-powered submarine would be the next crucial step in enhancing the North Korean navy.

Described as a "multipurpose" warship, this destroyer is equipped to utilise various weapons systems, including anti-aircraft and anti-naval weapons, as well as nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles. Kim indicated that the ship would be operational by early next year. *—PTI*

AFTER A LONG BATTLE

Epstein accuser Virginia found dead at her farm

MELBOURNE, 26 APRIL

Virginia Giuffre, the woman who accused Prince Andrew and others of sexual abuse while she was trafficked by Jeffrey Epstein, has allegedly died by suicide at her farm in Western Australia. She was 41.

This comes days after Giuffre posted about having "four days to live".

Her family said in a statement: "Virginia was a fierce warrior in the fight against sexual abuse and sex trafficking… She will be missed beyond measure." Her publicist, Dini von Mueffling, called her "deeply loving, wise and funny."

Born Virginia Roberts in the US, Giuffre said she was sexually abused in childhood, later trafficked by Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. Recruited at age 17 while working at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago club, she said she was forced into sexual encounters with Epstein and powerful men, including Prince Andrew.

Andrew denied the allegations but settled a civil lawsuit with her in 2022, making a "substantial donation" to her charity and acknowledging she was an "established victim of abuse."

Giuffre became a key figure in the Epstein scandal, despite inconsistencies in her story. Much of her account was supported by documents and a now-infamous photo with Prince Andrew in Maxwell's London home.

After Epstein's 2019 suicide and Maxwell's 2021 conviction, Giuffre remained an advocate, founding the survivors' charity SOAR in 2015. Recently separated from her husband and facing legal issues in Perth, she had also been hospitalised following a serious accident. She is survived by her three children, whom her family described as "the light of her life." *—PTI*

The picture of Price Andrew with his arm draped around 17-year-old Virginia Giuffre (inset), and Ghislaine Maxwell, sent shockwaves through the world when it was published in 2011; Giuffre fell into Jeffrey Epstein's (inset) orbit after a chance meeting with Maxwell, who was convicted of recruiting young girls for him, at Mar-a-Lago in 2000 **PHOTO: VIRGINIA GIUFFRE**

Iran port explosion linked to missile chemicals

MUSCAT, 26 APRIL

For hours, authorities in Iran could offer no clear explanation for what caused the blast at Shahid Rajaei port, which is just outside of Bandar Abbas. They did however deny that the explosion had anything to do with the country's oil industry

Ship-tracking data analysed by The Associated Press put one of the vessels believed to be carrying the sodium perchlorate rocket fuel, used for missiles, in the vicinity in March, as private security firm Ambrey said. Iran, however, hasn't acknowledged taking the shipment. The Iranian mission to the United Nations didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

It's unclear why Iran wouldn't have moved the chemicals from the port, particularly after the Beirut port blast in 2020.

That explosion, caused by the ignition of hundreds of tonnes of highly explosive ammonium nitrate, killed more than 200 people and injured more than 6,000 others.

Social media footage of the explosion on Saturday at Shahid Rajaei saw reddish-hued smoke rising from the fire just before the detonation which suggests a chemical compound being involved in the blast. Other videos showed black billowing smoke and glass blown out of buildings kilometers, or miles, away from the epicentre of the explosion.

State television also reported that there had been a building collapse caused by the explosion but offered no further explanation.

Shahid Rajaei has been a target before. A 2020 cyberattack attributed to Israel targeted the port, shortly after Israel said that it thwarted a cyberattack against its water infrastructure, which it attributed to Iran. *—PTI*

L&T Finance Q4 profit rises 15%

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Retail-focused non-bank lender L&T Finance Holdings on Friday reported a 15 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 636 crore for the January-March quarter of 2024-25. The company had earned a net profit of Rs 554 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year. During the quarter, the NBFC's total income increased to Rs 4,027 crore from Rs 3,676 crore a year ago, L&T Finance said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew to Rs 3,750 crore during the period under review, from Rs 3,323 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. Retail disbursements rose to Rs 14,899 crore as compared to Rs 15,044 crore in the last quarter of the previous year. *—PTI*

India Cements Q4 profit at Rs 14.68 cr, revenue down 3.1%

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The India Cements Ltd, now an Aditya Birla Group firm, on Saturday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 14.68 crore for the quarter ended in March 2025. It had reported a net loss of Rs 60.55 crore in the January-March period a year ago, according to a BSE filing. However, its revenue from operations was down 3.11 per cent to Rs 1,197.30 crore in the March quarter of FY25. This was at Rs 1,235.74 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal. Total expenses of India Cements were at Rs 1,313.2 crore, down marginally in the March quarter. Total income, which includes other income, declined by 2.52 per cent to Rs 1,255.66 crore in the March quarter. For the financial year ended on 31 March, 2025, India Cements reported narrowing of its net loss to Rs 143.88 crore from Rs 227.34 crore in FY'24. Total income was at Rs 4,357.41 crore in FY2, down 13.81 per cent compared to the previous year. *—PTI*

Sarvam to make India's 1st LMM with reasoning ability

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Lightspeed venture capital-backed Sarvam AI will develop India's first AI platform in six months, the company's founder said on Saturday. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the selection of Sarvam AI to develop India's first GenAI platform. "We are confident that Sarvam's models will be competitive with global models," Vaishnaw said. The minister asked for a timeline for developing the platform from Sarvam founders who committed that it would be done in six months. "Building an AI ecosystem for India has always been core to Sarvam's mission, where our research, technology, and models empower builders to create solutions for the country. As part of the Sovereign LLM proposal, we are developing three model variants," Sarvam, co-founder Pratyush Kumar said. The government will allocate 400 GPUs to Sarvam for six months for the development of India's own large language models with 70 billion parameters. *—PTI*

Zydus gets 6 observations from USFDA for API unit

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Zydus Lifesciences on Saturday said the US health regulator has issued six observations after inspecting its Gujarat-based API manufacturing unit. "We wish to inform that the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) conducted a surveillance inspection at the group's API (active pharmaceutical ingredient) unit located at Dabhasa in Gujarat," the drug firm said in a regulatory filing. The inspection was conducted from 21-25 April, 2025. "The inspection concluded with 6 observations and none of them were related to data integrity," Zydus Lifesciences said. The company is confident of addressing the observations expeditiously, it added. *—PTI*

Foreign investors infuse Rs 17,424 cr in markets

FPI continued buying stocks amid rising Indo-Pak tensions

MUMBAI, 26 APRIL

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) remained net buyers in Indian stock markets this week, with a net inflow of Rs 17,424.88 crore, according to data released by NSDL.

The data shows that FPIs continued their buying trend despite rising tensions at the India-Pakistan border.

Recently, there has been a major geopolitical concern after terrorists killed innocent tourists in Kashmir. This situation has created an overhang on Indian markets. Investors fear the possibility of an Indian retaliation, similar to what was seen after the Uri and Balakot attacks, which happened 10 and 15 days after previous Pakistani misadventures.

Despite the strong inflows over the past two weeks, the net FPI investment in April remains negative **PHOTO: PTI**

Even though Indian companies reported good earnings, foreign investors brought in strong inflows, and global cues were positive with hopes of a possible tariff war settlement, Indian markets still moved down after the Kashmir incident.

Despite the strong inflows over the past two weeks, the net FPI investment in April remains negative. According to the NSDL data, the net outflow for April stands at Rs 5,678 crore. This shows that the inflows seen recently have not been enough to offset the earlier outflows in the month.

Looking at the bigger picture for the year 2025 so far, foreign investors have pulled out a significant amount from Indian markets. The current border tensions could continue to keep Indian markets under pressure for the next few weeks, even if global markets stay positive and earnings growth remains strong. *—ANI*

Air India Group flew 38.8 lakh passengers with 26.7 per cent market share **PHOTO: PTI**

Indian airlines carried 1.45 cr passengers in March: DGCA

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Indian airlines carried 1.45 crore passengers in March, an increase of 8.79 per cent compared to the year-ago period, according to official data released on Saturday.

The Indian carriers had flown a total of 1.33 crore passengers in March 2024.

"Passengers carried by domestic airlines during March 2025 were 145.42 lakh as against 133.68 lakh during the corresponding period of the previous year," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in its monthly domestic passenger traffic report.

In the month gone by, IndiGo transported a total of 93.1 lakh passengers with a market share of 64 per cent while Air India Group flew 38.8 lakh passengers with 26.7 per cent market share.

The two other major carriers - Akasa Air and SpiceJet - flew 7.2 lakh and 4.8 lakh passengers, respectively in March 2025, cornering market share of 5 per cent and 3.3 per cent.

IndiGo delivered the highest on-time performance (OTP) at 88.1 per cent for March 2025 followed by Akasa Air at 86.9 per cent while that of Air India Group and SpiceJet was at 82 per cent and 72.1 per cent, respectively.

OTP has been computed for four metro airports -- Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. *—PTI*

DGCA ISSUES ADVISORY TO AIRLINES

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued an advisory to airlines, emphasising the need for improved communication and catering services for passengers, as international flights face extended durations due to Pakistan's airspace closure to Indian carriers.

The closure has resulted in significantly longer flight times, particularly for services operating from northern Indian cities like Delhi. DGCA's advisory outlines five key areas: pre-flight communication, in-flight catering, medical preparedness, customer service, and intra-departmental coordination.

Airlines are mandated to proactively inform passengers about changes in routing and revised travel times, as well as any potential technical stops at intermediate airports. *—PTI*

Anant is RIL's new director

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's youngest son, **Anant Ambani** has been appointed as Executive Director of Reliance Industries Ltd for a five-year term effective 1 May, the company said.

Ambani in August 2023 inducted his three children – Isha, Akash and Anant - on the board of oil-to-telecom conglomerate as non-executive directors, in preparation of an eventual succession plan.

Asia's richest person in recent years has said that the children would have significant roles at Reliance, India's most valuable and profitable company. Eldest son Akash is already chairman of the telecom arm, Jio Infocomm since June 2022 after joining the unit in 2014.

His twin sister Isha drives the company's retail, e-commerce and luxury businesses. Anant overseas new energy business.

Anant was appointed as the leader of the company's energy vertical in August 2022. *—PTI*

Reliance Retail's revenue hits Rs 11.5 cr in FY25

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Reliance Retail's consumer business revenue touched Rs 11,500 crore in FY25, becoming the company's fastest growing vertical in India.

Reliance, which is present in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment with Independence, Campa and other brands, is scaling its presence across the country.

Its soft drink brand Campa has already gained double-digit market share in the key markets where it is available, he said.

In FY25, Reliance's consumer businesses "continued to expand its reach through general trade leading to 3.5X Y-o-Y growth in sales during the period". *—PTI*

JIO PLATFORMS' PROFIT UP 25.7%

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

RIL's digital arm Jio Platforms posted a 25.7 per cent increase in profit after tax to Rs 7,022 crore in the last quarter of the 2024-25 financial year on Friday.

It was driven by growth in average revenue per user from telecom business due to tariff hike rolled out in July 2024.

The company had registered a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 5,587 crore in the same period a year ago.

For the year ended March 31, 2025, Jio's PAT grew by about 22 per cent to Rs 26,120 crore from Rs 21,434 crore in the year-ago period. Revenue from operations of Jio Platforms grew by about 17 per cent to Rs 1,28,218 crore in FY25 from Rs 1,09,558 crore in FY24. *—PTI*

Centre to unveil Rs 255 cr fisheries projects

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh is set to inaugurate and lay the foundation for vital projects benefiting seven coastal states and union territories, with a total investment of Rs 255.30 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). The event will take place at a coastal states meeting in Mumbai on Monday.

During the meeting, the minister will unveil a series of initiatives designed to bolster marine fisheries and promote sustainable practices. These include the Marine Fisheries Census Operations, the Turtle Excluder Device (TED) project, and the release of a Standard Operating Procedure for Vessel Communication and Support Systems.

Ministers of state for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, SP Singh Baghel and George Kurian, will also attend the event. Certificates will be awarded to distinguished cooperatives, fishery farmers' producer organisations, start-ups in the fisheries sector, and climate-resilient coastal fishing villages.

Rajiv Ranjan Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

As part of the PMMSY, beneficiaries will receive Aqua Insurance certificates and Kisan Credit Cards, marking the introduction of Aqua Insurance—an initiative aimed at providing robust financial protection to aqua-farmers. This pioneering scheme focuses on targeted insurance coverage, digital accessibility, and dedicated support for underprivileged communities within the fisheries sector.

Fisheries ministers from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Puducherry, along with state government officials, are expected to participate, discussing region-specific challenges and promoting sustainable practices tailored to coastal ecosystems. *—PTI*

4.17 CR SHARES ALLOCATED

Ather secures Rs 1,340 cr ahead of IPO launch on

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Electric two-wheeler manufacturer Ather Energy Ltd has raised Rs 1,340 crore from anchor investors just days before its initial public offering (IPO) opens for public subscription on 28 April.

Prominent investors, including Custody Bank of Japan, Franklin Templeton, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, and Societe Generale, among others, have been allocated shares at Rs 321 each, the upper limit of the price band. A total of 4.17 crore shares have been allotted to 36 funds, bringing the transaction size to Rs 1,340 crore.

The public issue, valued at Rs 2,981 crore, will be available from 28 to 30 April, offering shares priced between Rs 304 and Rs 321 each. The IPO comprises a fresh equity issue worth Rs 2,626 crore and an offer-for-sale of 1.1 crore shares by promoters and existing shareholders.

Ather plans to utilise the funds to establish a new electric two-wheeler factory in Maharashtra and reduce its debt. The company is also enhancing its research and development capabilities. The shares are expected to list on 6 May, marking the second electric two-wheeler IPO this financial year, following Ola Electric Mobility's Rs 6,145 crore IPO last year. *—PTI*

Prominent investors have been allocated shares at Rs 321 each, the upper limit of the price band **PHOTO: PTI**

- Ather plans to utilise the funds to establish a new electric two-wheeler factory in Maharashtra and reduce its debt. The company is also enhancing its research and development capabilities.

GOVT, SWIGGY INSTAMART SIGN MOU

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The cooperation ministry has signed a memorandum of understanding with Swiggy Instamart to onboard cooperative dairy and other products on the e-commerce platform.

Under the agreement, products under Bharat Organics and other cooperative dairy products will be available on Swiggy's e-commerce and q-commerce platforms. The agreement was signed on Friday by Swiggy Instamart CEO Amitesh Jha and Joint Secretary of Ministry DK Verma, with Cooperation Secretary Ashish Kumar Bhutani present at ceremony.

It will create a dedicated "Cooperative" category on its platform, featuring organic products, dairy, millets, handicraft and other items developed by cooperative organizations. *—PTI*

WHEN MET WITH HURDLES

61% Indians stop pursuing goals: Study

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Around 61 per cent of Indians who participated in a survey shared that they stopped pursuing a professional or creative goal after facing hurdles, a Google and Kantar report said on Friday.

The study was conducted to understand Gen AI adoption, potential, and impact among people in India in which over 8,000 people across 18 cities covered.

"Common roadblocks often prevent progress, such as simply getting started, a struggle for 68 per cent or lacking necessary skills and guidance, which holds back 52 per cent. These aren't minor frustrations; they can sometimes have real costs, often stopping people from pursuing goals altogether, with 61 per cent of Indians reporting they abandoned a professional or creative aspiration due to such hurdles," the report said.

The study found that while AI excitement is high, it's still early days for adoption **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

The study found that while AI excitement is high, it's still early days for adoption.

According to the 60 per cent that were covered in study aren't familiar with AI, and only 31 per cent have tried any Generative AI tool.

The research also showed a strong, innate desire among Indians to improve and excel, with the majority seeking to boost productivity (72 per cent), enhance creativity (77 per cent), and communicate more effectively (73 per cent) in their daily lives. *—PTI*

- According to the 60 per cent that were covered in study aren't familiar with AI, and only 31 per cent have tried any Generative AI tool.

'India lifted 171M people from extreme poverty'

NEW YORK, 26 APRIL

India has lifted 171 million people from extreme poverty in the decade between 2011-12 and 2022-23, the World Bank said.

"Over the past decade, India has significantly reduced poverty. Extreme poverty fell from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.3 per cent in 2022-23, lifting 171 million people above this line," the World Bank said in its "Poverty & Equity Brief" on India.

It added that rural extreme poverty dropped from 18.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent, and urban from 10.7 per cent to 1.1 per cent, narrowing the rural-urban gap from 7.7 to 1.7 percentage points — a 16 per cent annual decline.

The brief said India also transitioned into the lower-middle-income category. Rural poverty dropped from 69 per cent to 32.5 per cent, and urban poverty from 43.5 per cent to 17.2 per cent, reducing the rural-urban gap from 25 to 15 percentage points with a 7 per cent annual decline.

The brief added that employment growth has outpaced the working-age population since 2021-22.

Employment rates, especially among women, are rising, and urban unemployment fell to 6.6 per cent in Q1 FY24/25, the lowest since 2017-18.

Recent data indicates a shift of male workers from rural to urban areas for the first time since 2018-19, while rural female employment in agriculture has grown.

The brief said that youth unemployment is 13.3 per cent, increasing to 29 per cent among tertiary education graduates. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Aditi Ashok is likely to cut Chevron Classic

WOODLANDS, 26 APRIL

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok endured a difficult second day at the Chevron Championship here as she finished with a round of two-over par 74. Put alongside her first round even par 72, she was two-over for 36 holes and on the cut line. Though there are nine players yet to finish the second round, Aditi should cut the line. Recent Epson Tour graduate Yan Liu held onto the top spot at the end of the second round as Haeran Ryu slipped down the order to tie sixth.—*PTI*

India guaranteed 43 Medals at Asian Boxing C'ships

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

India has confirmed 43 medals at the inaugural Asian U-15 & U-17 Boxing Championships, organised by the newly recognised Asian Boxing body under World Boxing, with four more pugilists punching their way into the semifinals on Day 7 in Amman. India is now assured of at least 25 medals in the U-15 category and 18 in the U-17, as all semifinalists are guaranteed bronze. Aman (63kg) and Devansh (80kg) led the charge in the U-17 boys' section, both securing Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) wins over opponents from the Philippines and Jordan, respectively, in the last set of quarterfinals bouts.In the girls' division, Kaur (60kg) posted a commanding 5-0 win over Jordan's Aya, while Himanshi (70kg) ended her bout in the very first round—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Women's tri-series: All eyes on rookie seamer Kashvee

COLOMBO, 26 APRIL

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur would like to check the Indian women's team's pace-bowling resources, including rookie seamer Kashvee Gautam, when it takes on hosts Sri Lanka in the opening tri-series match here on Sunday. The tournament kicks off the Women In Blue's preparations for the 50-over World Cup, which will be held in India later this year, and the bowling composition will be key. The batting department bears a settled look. Kashvee, a former India U-19 Women's T20 World Cup winner, was a revelation for Gujarat Giants in the Women's Premier League.—*PTI*

Matteo Arnaldi upsets Djokovic in Madrid

MADRID, 26 APRIL

Matteo Arnaldi stunned fourth seed Novak Djokovic on Saturday at the Mutua Madrid Open. The Italian delivered an inspired performance against his lifelong idol and capitalised on a below-par Djokovic to oust the three-time champion 6-3, 6-4. Djokovic has now suffered three consecutive defeats. He reached the Miami final before falling to Jakub Mensik and then lost to Alejandro Tabilo in his Monte-Carlo opener. The Serbian, who was aiming for his 100th tour-level title this fortnight, leaves Madrid with a 12-7 season record, according to the Infosys ATP Win-Loss Index. Arnaldi, No. 44 in the PIF ATP Rankings, next faces Damir Dzumhur, who overcame 32nd seed Baez 1-6, 6-1, 6-2.—*PTI*

MI, LSG set for intense mid-table IPL battle

MI and LSG both have an impressive 10 points

MUMBAI, 26 APRIL

A rampaging Mumbai Indians will look to maintain their winning run in a vital mid-table battle against a dangerous Lucknow Super Giants in an Indian Premier League clash on Sunday.

Placed fourth and sixth, respectively, MI and LSG both have an impressive 10 points in their kitty and are only separated by the net run rate won five matches each and lost four in nine games so far.

While these two teams will battle for on-field supremacy at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai's unrelenting heat and humidity will also play their part in testing the players' readiness to give it all in adverse conditions. For the visitors, a negative NRR of -0.054 is something they would be keen to improve while hoping that their skipper Rishabh Pant can get a big score under his belt. Pant has managed a lowly 106 runs in nine matches so far this season while shuffling across batting positions to discover what works for him, but none of his efforts seem to have worked for the India wicketkeeper-batter.

LSG's bowling line-up isn't an intimidating one on paper, but is smart enough to work their way around conditions and pitches. —*PTI*

A rampaging Mumbai Indians will look to maintain their winning run on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

"IPL has reached a stage where even 300 is possible, any team can do it"

-Rinku Singh, KKR batter

"SRH have not done well on slow and tricky surfaces so far in this IPL"

-Daniel Vettori, Sunrisers Hyderabad coach

LSG VS MI

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	7
LSG Won:	6
MI Won:	1

LSG vs MI Match starts at **3.30 pm IST**

Bengaluru & Delhi Capitals clash at Kotla

DC and RCB are expected to make the play-offs

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Virat Kohli and KL Rahul will headline the battle of anchors, while Mitchell Starc versus Josh Hazlewood in the pace department can only add more spice to the contest between the in-form Delhi Capitals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL here on Sunday.

Things can change rather quickly in the IPL, but on current form, both DC and RCB are expected to make the play-offs. Two points at the Feroz Shah Kotla will significantly help the winning team in that context.

Kohli remains the biggest draw as he returns to his 'home ground' at the back of five half-centuries in nine games. Four of them have come away from the Chinnaswamy Stadium, and despite being in the opposition camp, the Delhi crowd will be hoping the Indian superstar extends his prolific run in the tournament.

Slower surfaces this season have made stroke-making tougher, but RCB's leading run-getter Kohli has thrived on that challenge to flourish for his team.

Another batter who has done remarkably well under the circumstances is Rahul, who has scored the most runs for Delhi Capitals. —*PTI*

High spirits and optimistic anticipation will dominate the mood around the Arun Jaitley Stadium Sunday evening PHOTO: PTI

"Other teams have got better, and that's the point of the auction. But we just haven't been able to get it right"

-Stephen Fleming, Long-time head coach

"You can plug a hole or two, but if the majority does badly, it's difficult"

-Mahendra Singh Dhoni, CSK all-rounder

RCB VS DC

PLAYED:	32
RCB Won:	19
DC Won:	12
NO RESULT	1

RCB vs DC Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

COPA DEL REY FINAL

Barcelona wants to grab the first piece of a potential treble of major title PHOTO: X / @FCBARCELONA

Barcelona and Real Madrid meet is more than a trophy

BARCELONA, 26 APRIL

Barcelona and Real Madrid meet in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday with more than just the trophy on the line.

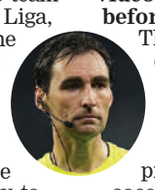
Barcelona wants to grab the first piece of a potential treble of major titles in coach Hansi Flick's debut season. The team is on pace to conquer La Liga, and three days after the cup final, it will start its two-leg Champions League semifinal against Inter Milan.

"We want to fight for every title we can, and we now have the opportunity to win three titles, and that is our goal," Flick said Friday.

It could also be the last trophy for Carlo Ancelotti, who many Madrid watchers speculate could leave the powerhouse this summer, possibly to take over Brazil.

Madrid arguably has more at stake. Out of the Champions League, the cup is its best chance to salvage the campaign with some silverware. It is also alive in La Liga, but it needs to overcome a four-point deficit to Barcelona with five games left, a finale that includes yet another Clásico.

Copa del Rey referee denounces Real Madrid video discrediting him before final



The referee for the Copa del Rey final got emotional on Friday when he described the verbal abuse his child suffers because of criticism his profession receives from soccer's top clubs, in his case led by Real Madrid.

Ricardo de Burgos Bengoechea expressed his anguish to reporters after Madrid's club-owned television station aired a video supposedly documenting his bias against the club. To see your son come from school crying because some kids have said his dad is a crook is very hard to take. —*PTI*

Indian women's hockey team loses 3-5 to Australia 'A'

PERTH, 26 APRIL

The Indian women's hockey team fought valiantly before losing 3-5 to a clinical Australia 'A' in its opening match of the tour Down Under here Saturday.

India found the back of the net through Mahima Tete (27th minute), Navneet Kaur (45th), and Lalremsiami (50th), while Neasa Flynn (3rd), Olivia Downes (9th), Ruby Harris (11th), Tatum Stewart (21st), and Kendra Fitzpatrick (44th) scored for Australia 'A' at the Perth hockey stadium.

The match began at a frenetic pace, with Australia 'A' taking early control with a well-constructed field goal by Flynn.

Indian players wore black armbands during the match to mourn the victims of the Pahalgam attack. PHOTO: PTI

The home team continued to press hard, and in quick succession, Downes and Harris capitalised on Indian defensive lapses to score two more field goals, ending the first quarter with a commanding 3-0 lead.

Australia 'A' carried the momentum into the second quarter, putting relentless pressure on the Indian defence. After earning back-to-back penalty corners, Stewart converted one, stretching their advantage to 4-0. Despite the early onslaught, India showed resilience, and Tete pulled a goal back with a sharp field goal, injecting some energy into the Indian side as they headed into half-time trailing 1-4. —*PTI*

NGETICH BREAKS 30 MINUTES IN WOMEN-ONLY 10K

PARIS, 26 APRIL

Kenyan long-distance runner Agnes Ngetich smashed the 10km world record in Herzogenaurach on Saturday, becoming the first woman to run the distance in under 30 minutes in a women-only race.

Ngetich, 24, clocked a time of 29 minutes and 27 seconds, breaking late Agnes Jebet Tirop's record of 30:01 set in the same German town in 2021.

Ngetich had clocked a time of 29:24 two years back in the women-only 10km race, but the record was not ratified because the course was found to be short by 25 metres."I'm so excited, I didn't expect this," Ngetich said."Last year I missed it by two seconds, so I wanted to come here today and try for it again. I'm so proud of myself. —*PTI*

GRAND CHESS TOUR

Praggnanandhaa claims win in opening round

SINGAPORE, 26 APRIL

Indian Grand Master R Praggnanandhaa claimed a clinical win against Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in the opening round of the Poland Rapid leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

Wielding the black pieces, Praggnanandhaa navigated through a Closed Sicilian Defense opening pattern before gaining control in the middle phase.

An error from Vachier-Lagrave in the 29th and 31st moves shifted the game into the Indian's corner. Praggnanandhaa held onto the advantage, forcing his opponent to resign after the 45th move.

David Gavrilescu was the only other player to earn a win on the opening day, with the Romanian triumphing over Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov.

Aravindh Chitham baram, the other Indian in the fray, played out a draw with Romania's Bogdan-Daniel Deac. On Sunday, Chithambaram will square up against Praggnanan dhaa, with the latter playing with the white pieces. —*PTI*

Karna Kadur, Musa Sherif lead in APRC, overall categories

CHENNAI, 26 APRIL

Reigning national champion Karna Kadur from Bengaluru set the early pace to take a slender lead in the FIA Asia Pacific Rally the short Super Special Stage which kick-started the Indu Chandhok Memorial 48th South India Rally at the Madras International Circuit, here on Friday. Kadur, representing Arka Motorsports with veteran Musa Sherif (Kasargod) in the co-driver's seat, not only topped the chart in the APRC (Asia Cup)segment, but also led the field in the Blueband FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship 2025 Round-1, sparing half-a-second to team-mate, Mangaluru's Jason (co-driver Murthy from Bengaluru). —*PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Jackson ends drought as Chelsea boost top five push

LONDON, 26 APRIL

Chelsea celebrate Nicolas Jackson's goal against Everton PHOTO: X / @CHELSEAFC

Chelsea boosted their bid to qualify for the Champions League as Nicolas Jackson ended his 13-game goal drought to seal a crucial 1-0 win against Everton on Saturday.

Jackson struck in the first half at Stamford Bridge to get back on the scoresheet for the first time since December.

The much-maligned Senegal forward's 10th goal of the season was enough to lift Enzo Maresca's side into fourth place in the Premier League.

The Blues' second successive Premier League win was vital to their attempt to finish in the top five.

Chelsea will drop to fifth place if Newcastle beat third-bottom Ipswich later on Saturday, but Jackson's winner ensured they remain in the hunt to return to the Champions League with four games left.

Despite the much-needed result, it was another nervous afternoon for Maresca, who insisted this week that his first season at Chelsea has not been a failure after criticism of the Italian's conservative tactics. —*PTI*

Honsak stunner improves Heidenheim's survival hopes

STUTTGART, 26 APRIL

The visitors moved five points clear of the bottom two automatic relegation spots in Germany's top flight, pulling off a vital victory after three successive defeats.

Honsak picked the ball up on the edge of the Stuttgart penalty, dropped his shoulder to open up a little space area before curling a sumptuous left-foot strike into the top corner to send the travelling supporters wild with excitement. Both sides hit the woodwork prior to the winner, but it was Stuttgart that showed most of the attacking intent.

Honsak

The hosts held 70 per cent of the possession and fired off 19 shots to Heidenheim's six, but only three of them were on target, leading to a frustrating result that almost certainly ends what slim hopes remained of a place in the European qualifying spots.

Despite the win, Heidenheim's situation is far from precarious. It remains five points off absolute safety with three matches left to play, and currently occupies the relegation play-off spot. Those last three games will be against Bochum, Union Berlin, and Bremen. —*PTI*